MARIAMNE.

A

TRAGEDY.

BY

ELIJAH FENTON, Esq;

——————Æstuat ingens
Imo in corde pudor, mixtoque infania luctu,
Et furiis agitatus amor, et conscia virtus. VIRG.

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THE LIFE OF ELIJAH FENTON, Esq;

THIS gentleman was the youngest of twelve children, and was born at a town called Shelton, near Newcastle under Line, in Staffordshire. All the writers of his life are silent as to the date of his birth, but agree that he was intended for the ministry, to prepare him for which he was sent to the university of Cambridge, and entered of Jesus College. Here, however, he embraced principles very opposite to the government, whereby he became disqualified for the taking orders. Soon after his quitting the University, he was entertained by the Earl of Orrery as his secretary; but how long he continued in that office does not clearly appear. He seems indeed to have passed the most of his time in the country, among his friends and relations: but whether he had any thing of an independent fortune, or was assisted by his eldest brother, who had an estate of a thousand pounds *per ann.* and to whom he constantly paid an annual visit, I have not been able to determine. Certain, however, it is, that he was a man of great humanity and tenderness, and of a most affable and genteel behaviour; which qualities, joined to his great good sense and literary abilities, highly endeared him to all who knew him, and more especially to his relations, by whom he was greatly caressed.

His life, not being intermingled with any affairs of public business, was, like that of most studious men, very barren of incident. It was, however, blessed with an

uninterrupted calm, which he enjoyed till the inevitable ſtroke deprived the world of him and his virtues, on the 13th of July 1730. He died, and was buried at Eaſt Hampſtead Park, near Oakingham in Berkſhire, leaving behind him the ſame fair reputation he had carried with him through life.

Mr Fenton wrote only one dramatic piece, entitled, *Mariamne*, which, perhaps, met with as much applauſe as any play that had appeared for many years either before or after it: its merit not only brought crowded houſes for ſeveral nights together, but ſeemed by ſo doing to have turned the current of public favour into a new channel, from which, during the exiſtence of that theatre, it never after ſo totally deviated, as it had done for a conſiderable while before.

As a teſtimony of the friendſhip of Mr Pope, our Author received from that poet the tribute of the following elegant epitaph, which more ſtrongly characterizes the goodneſs of the perſon it was written upon, than all that I could add on this occaſion could poſſibly do.

EPITAPH.

This modeſt ſtone, what few vain marbles can,
May truly ſay, here lyes an honeſt man:
A poet bleſs'd beyond a poet's fate,
Whom Heav'n kept ſacred from the proud and great:
Foe to loud praiſe, and friend to learned eaſe,
Content with ſcience in the vale of peace.
Calmly he look'd on either life, and here
Saw nothing to regret, or there to fear;
From Nature's temp'rate feaſt roſe ſatisfy'd,
Thank'd Heav'n, that he had liv'd, and that he dy'd.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

JOHN, Lord GOWER,

Baron of STITTENHAM.

My LORD,

YOUR Lordſhip's known candour and humanity were never more conſpicuous than when you condeſcended to promote the intereſt of the following tragedy. An imperfect eſſay! at firſt attempted only for a private amuſement, and formed on the model of the ancient Greek drama; but I was afterwards prevailed upon by my friend Mr Southern's importunity to bring it on the ſtage. The uncommon ſucceſs which it met with there, I have not the vanity to aſcribe to any merit in the play; but owe it purely to the general diſpoſition of the town,

to give a kind reception to whatever comes recommended with your Lordſhip's protection. Let your goodneſs, my Lord, indulge the ambition I have that it ſhould now appear in the world under your patronage; and allow me the honour of ever being, with the moſt perfect eſteem and gratitude,

My Lord,

Your Lordſhip's

moſt obliged and

moſt obedient ſervant,

ELIJAH FENTON.

PROLOGUE.

Written by a FRIEND.

Spoken by Mr RYAN.

WHEN breathing ſtatues mould'ring waſte away,
And tombs, unfaithful to their truſt, decay;
The Muſe recalls the ſuff'ring good to fame,
Or wakes the proſp'rous villain into ſhame:
To the ſtern tyrant gives fictitious pow'r,
To reign the reſtleſs monarch of an hour.
Obedient to her call, this night appears
Great Herod *riſing from a length of years:*
A name enlarg'd with titles not his own,
Servile to mount, and ſavage on the throne:
Whoſe bold ambition trembling Jewry *view'd,*
In blood of half her royal race imbru'd.
But now reviving in the Britiſh *ſcene,*
He looks majeſtic with a milder mein:
His features ſoften'd with the deep diſtreſs
Of love, made greatly wretched by exceſs!
From luſt of pow'r to jealous fury toſt,
We ſhew the tyrant in the lover loſt.
If no compaſſion, when his crimes are weigh'd,
To his ill-fated fondneſs muſt be paid:
Yet ſee, ye fair! and ſee with pitying eyes
The bright afflicted Mariamne *riſe.*
No fancy'd tale! our op'ning ſcenes diſcloſe
Hiſtoric truth, and ſwell with real woes.
Awful in virtuous grief the Queen appears,
And ſtrong the eloquence of royal tears.
Then, let her fate your kind attention raiſe,
Whoſe perfect charms were but her ſecond praiſe:
Beauty and virtue your protection claim;
Give tears to Beauty, and to Virtue fame.

Dramatis Personæ.

HEROD the Great.

His Young Son.

PHERORAS, the King's brother.

SOHEMUS, first minister.

NARBAL, a Lord of the Queen's party.

HAZEROTH, a young Lord related to the Queen.

HIGHPRIEST.

SAMEAS, the King's cupbearer.

FLAMINIUS, a Roman general.

MARIAMNE.

SALOME, the King's sister.

ARSINOE, chief attendant on the Queen.

Guards, Messengers, Attendants.

SCENE, *A Room of state in* Herod's *palace at* Jerusalem.

MARIAMNE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

Enter PHERORAS, NARBAL, *and* SOHEMUS.

PHERORAS.

THE Morning, in her richeſt purple rob'd,
Smiles with auſpicious luſtre on the day
Which brings my royal brother back from Rhodes,
Confirm'd in empire by the general voice
Of Cæſar, and the ſenate.

Nar. This bleſt day
In fateſt annals ſhall diſtinguiſh'd ſhine,
Sacred to majeſty, and dear to love:
The ſame which ſaw the royal lovers march
In nuptial pomp, revolving now reſtores
Herod to Mariamne, and his crown.

Soh. Fortune at length to merit grows a friend,
Or Fate ordain'd the happieſt ſtars to ſhed
Their influence on his birth: or, ſure, ſince Rome,
With civil diſcord rent, ſo oft hath chang'd
Her own great lords, (as bleeding conqueſt rais'd,
Or ſunk the doubtful balance), we had ſhar'd
The ſame viciſſitudes of reſtleſs power.

Nar. Herod avowed the dear reſpect he bore
To Anthony, and drop'd a generous tear
To grace his ruins.

Pher. Yes, and Cæſar ſat
Penſive and ſilent; in his anxious breaſt
Perhaps revolving, that of all his train,
Who proudly wanton in his mounted rays,
Gay fluttering inſects of a ſummer noon,
How few wou'd bear the wintry ſtorms of Fate!
At length he ſmiling roſe, receiv'd the crown
From Herod's hand, and plac'd it on his brow,

Crying, Shine there! for Cæſar cannot find
A worthier head to wear thee.

Soh. From the grace
Of ſuch a victor to receive a crown,
With ſuch peculiar attributes of fame,
Confers more glory than a chronicle
Of ſcepter'd anceſtors.

Pher. Narbal, your care
Will ſee due honours to the day diſcharg'd.
Let the ſhrill trumpet's chearful note enjoin
A general feaſt, and joy with loud acclaim
Through all the ſtreets of Solyma reſound:
Let ſteams of grateful incenſe cloud the ſky,
'Till the rich fragrance reach the utmoſt bounds
Of Herod's empire; let each ſmiling brow
Wear peaceful olive, whilſt the virgin choirs
Warbling his praiſe, his paths with flow'rs perfume,
Who guards Judea with the ſhield of Rome.

[*Exit* Narbal.

SCENE II.

PHERORAS *and* SOHEMUS.

Soh. My Lord, the province you've aſſign'd agrees
With Narbal's talents; none is better form'd
To gild the pageant of a gaudy day:
He's nobly born, and popularly vain,
Rare tinſel-ſtuff t' adorn a room of ſtate!
But in the council, where the public care——

Pher. In that high ſphere you, Sohemus, alone
Muſt ever ſhine: and may your wiſdom raiſe
Your maſter's fortune, to divide the globe
With this new Cæſar; and no longer ſway
A ſhort precarious ſceptre, which muſt ſhake
With each tempeſtuous guſt that blows from Rome.

Soh. With bluſhes I muſt hear you call me wiſe,
When one impaſſion'd woman can deſtroy
My ſureſt plans, and with a ſigh blow down
The firmeſt fabric of deliberate thought.
Heavens! that a king conſummate for a throne,
So wiſe in council, and ſo great in arms,
Should after nine long years remain a ſlave,

Becauſe his wife is fair! What art thou, Beauty,
Whoſe charm makes Senſe and Valour grow as tame
As a blind turtle?

Pher. Is thy wiſdom proof
Againſt the blandiſhments of warm deſire?
It ill defends thee from Arſinoe's charms!
The ſullen ſweetneſs of a downcaſt eye,
A feign'd unkindneſs, or a juſt reproach,
Breath'd in a ſigh, and ſoften'd with a tear,
Would make thy rigid marble melt like ſnow,
On the warm boſom of the youthful Spring.

Soh. In thoughtleſs youth gay Nature gives the rein
To Love, and bids him urge the full career:
But Herod ſhould reſtrain his headſtrong courſe,
Now reaſon is mature.

Pher. He never can;
For Mariamne, with ſuperior charms,
Triumphs o'er reaſon; in her look ſhe bears
A paradiſe of ever-blooming ſweets,
Fair as the firſt idea Beauty prints
On the young lover's ſoul: a winning grace
Guides every geſture, and obſequious Love
Attends on all her ſteps; for majeſty
Streams from her eye to each beholder's heart,
And checks the tranſport which her charms inſpire.
Who would not live her ſlave!——Nor is her mind
Form'd with inferior elegance!——By her,
So abſolute in every grace, we gueſs
What eſſence angels have.

Soh. Who can admire
The brighteſt angel, when his hand unſheaths
The vengeful ſword, or with dire peſtilence
Unpeoples nations? If Death fits enthron'd
In the ſoft dimple of a damaſk cheek,
He thence can aim his ſilent dart as ſure
As from the wrinkle of a tyrant's frown;
And that's our caſe! Yet with a lover's eye
You view the gay malignance, that will blaſt
Both you and all your friends.

Pher. We ſure may praiſe

The ſnake that glitters in her ſummer pride,
And yet beware the ſting.
Soh. But low in duſt
Cruſh the crown'd baſiliſk, or elſe ſhe kills
Whate'er her eye commands.——You need, my Lord,
No clearer light than this, by which to read
The purpoſe of my ſoul.
Pher. Though 'tis obſcure,
It ſtrikes like lightning, that with fear confounds
The pale night-wand'rer, whilſt it ſhews the path.
You, Sohemus, have cauſe to think the Queen
Charges the taking off her uncle's head
To your advice; and gladly would atone
Her kindred blood with yours; revenge ſtill glows,
Though hid in treacherous embers; and you'll feel
The dire effect, whene'er occaſion breathes
A gale to waken and foment the flame.
But I, unpractis'd in th' intrigues of courts,
And diſciplin'd in camps, will not ſupply
Increaſe of fuel to theſe home-bred jars:
I hope the King will ſee them ſoon ſuppreſs'd,
Or care ſucceeding care will ever tread
The circle of his crown.
Soh. If to purſue
The ſafeſt meaſures to ſecure his throne,
Shall irritate the Queen to make me fall
A victim to her rage, the conſcious pride
Of having acted what the King ordain'd,
Enter Meſſenger with a letter to Pheroras.
Will yet ſupport me. 'Tis not worth my care,
Whether the trembling hand of Age muſt ſhake
From the frail glaſs my laſt remaining ſand,
Or Fortune break the phial, ere the ſum
Of half my life is told.
Pher. 'Tis from the King;
A moſt unpleaſing meſſage for the Queen.
Soh. May I, my Lord, partake?
Pher. The infant Prince
Muſt live an hoſtage of the league at Rome:
Cæſar hath ſent a miniſter of truſt,

With guards to wait him. This, perhaps, the King
Hath kept conceal'd, that his return might calm
Th' afflicted Queen, and ſoften the ſurpriſe.

Soh. Names he, my Lord, the general, to whoſe care
The Prince muſt be conſign'd?

Pher. Rome could not chuſe
For that high charge a nobler delegate
Than my Flaminius; for a bolder hand
Ne'er flew her conquering eagles at their prey.
We in the Parthian wars together learn'd
The rudiments of arms; the ſummer ſun
Hath ſeen our marches meaſur'd by his own:
In battle ſo intrepid, that he ſhew'd
An appetite of danger; oft I've heard
The weary veterans, reſting on their ſpears,
Swear by the gods and majeſty of Rome,
They bluſh'd with indignation, to behold
The garland of the war, by partial Fate
Transferr'd from theirs, to grace a ſtripling's brow——
But I with Narbal will prevail, t' impart
This moſt ungrateful order to the Queen. [*Exit* Pher.

SCENE III.

SALOME *enters to* SOHEMUS.

Sal. I hope, my Lord, young Hazeroth's affront
Will not paſs unreſented.

Soh. I've diſpatch'd
A meſſage to the King: th' account I gave
Imported nothing but ſevereſt truth;
Yet wittieſt malice ſcarce cou'd feign a roll
Of keener calumnies

Sal. He mention'd me!

Soh. Traduc'd you baſely, by th' opprobrious name
Of Idumæan ſpinſter, in degree
The third deſcendant of an heathen ſlave,
Who kept Apollo's temple.

Sal. The King's veins
Hold the ſame blood, whatever is the ſource;
And if the wretch ſurvives that vile reproach,
The King's a ſlave indeed. What was your crime?

Soh. He ſaid, by my ſole counſels were deſtroy'd
All of the royal Aſmonæan race,
Whom Juſtice made the victims of the ſtate;
Whoſe injur'd diſcontented ghoſts too long
Had cry'd, Revenge! but ſhould not cry in vain:
Then half unſheath'd his ſabre.

Sal. That vain boy
Believes his near relation to the Queen
Exempts his haughty youth from all reſtraint.
He's Mariamne's echo, and repeats
But half her menaces.

Soh. What time more fit
To put her threats in act than when the King
Flies, with redoubled ardor, to her arms?
Paſſion improves with abſence; and his heart,
So ſoft and paſſive to the pow'r of love,
Will then be vacant only to his Queen.——
Fortune of late a glorious ſcene diſclos'd,
But ſoon ſnatch'd back the viſionary joy!
The bliſsful hour is paſt——Curs'd, doubly curs'd,
Be this boy-emperor! who tamely ſpar'd
The warmeſt friend that Anthony could boaſt.
Had Herod periſh'd by his vengeful ſword,
I ſoon had ſent (for ſo he left in charge)
His Queen, the worſhip'd idol of his ſoul,
T' attend him to the ſhades.——Clouds of deſpair
Now terminate our view!

Sal. Can you diſcern
No glimmering hope? Though dim, the diſtant ray
May ſerve to ſteer our courſe.

Soh. The King will ſend
His ſon for hoſtage, to reſide in Rome.

Sal. Were triple thunder vollied at the Queen,
It cou'd not rend her bleeding boſom more.
Than ſuch a meſſage.

Soh. At this little ſpark,
Diſcord may light her ever-burning torch:
Th' imperious Queen perhaps will edge her tongue
With keen reſentments for her ruin'd race.
For 'tis th' infirmity of nobleſt minds,

When ruffled with an unexpected woe,
To speak what settled prudence wou'd conceal:
As the vex'd ocean working in a storm,
Oft brings to light the wrecks, which long lay calm
In the dark bosom of the secret deep.
From such reproach, his promis'd joy may change
To coldness, and distrust, perhaps to hate;
And their high souls, that now, like friendly stars,
Mingling their beams in mutual ardor shine,
In fiercest opposition then will thwart
Each other's influence, and divide the court:
Then, Mischief, to thy work!——

Sal. In me you'll find
A sure assistant: shall Pheroras join?

Soh. I'd fly him at the quarry, but I fear
He'd check if other game shou'd cross the flight:
He scorns dissimulation, nor perceives
That Nature never meant simplicity
A grace to charm in courts: he serves the crown
With such a blind disinterested zeal,
He's even proud to obey.

Sal. Let him enjoy
His cold complexion'd principles, and fall
A traitor to himself.

Soh. O Princess! born
To bless the world with a long progeny
Of future heroes; and renew the strain
Of valour, which the softness of your sex
Unspirited at first: so great a soul
Deserves, and sure is destin'd to a throne——
But hark!——

Sal. The Queen's approaching; she repairs
To sacrifice.

Soh. 'Tis best we both retire. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

MARIAMNE, ARSINOE.

Mar. The Princess and her friend were unprepar'd
To pay the decencies the day requires;
The most unpractis'd in the courtier's art,

And they who hate us moſt, might ſure vouchſafe
A ſmooth unmeaning compliment at leaſt.
But night-born treaſon is too tender ey'd,
To bear the blaze of dazzling majeſty,
And ſeeks the guilty ſhade.

Arſ. They're both depriv'd
Of your propitious ſmile; ſo dire a loſs
Would cloud the moſt ſerene.

Mar. That ſullen gloom
Proceeds not from a conſcience of their crimes,
Which ſues by penitence for royal grace;
But argues high contempt: their brows diſplay
A banner of defiance, and avow
Their trait'rous combination: but I'll quell
The tow'ring creſt of their preſumptuous hate,
Or periſh in th' attempt. Henceforth forbear
All commerce with the Princeſs, and her train:
For fear the infection of example taint
Your ſound allegiance.

Arſ. If a ſingle thought
Were tinctur'd with diſloyalty, this hand
Shou'd pierce my heart to drive the rebel out.
Your ſtrict command with pleaſure I obey:
For at the ſight of Salome, my breaſt
Shivers with chilling horror, and revolves
The deſtiny which a Chaldæan ſeer
Of late foretold. The pious ſage had paſs'd
Full ſixty winters in a private cell:
His locks were ſilver'd o'er with reverend white,
And on his cheeks appear'd the pale effect
Of ſtudious abſtinence: his cuſtom was
In his ſmall hermitage t'outwatch the moon,
To marſhal in his ſchemes the hoſt of heaven;
And from their ruling influence at the birth,
Form'd his predictions. As the Princeſs paſs'd,
I aſk'd him if his foreſight cou'd diſcern
The colour of her fate; he anſwer'd, Black;
'Tis black, chequer'd with blood! Deep in her breaſt
I ſee the dagger, doom'd by Heaven's decree,
To cut her half-ſpun thread.

Mar. What powerful cauſe
Urg'd you to hear a vain diviner tell
His waking dreams? Perhaps you went to know
What happy ſtar preſided o'er the love
Which Sohemus, I hear, addreſs'd to you:
If ſo, I'll be your oracle; forbear
T' enquire the doubtful omens of the ſky,
And fix your faith on this unerring truth:
If your ill-judging choice miſlead your heart,
To meet his paſſion with an equal flame;
Henceforth for ever baniſh'd from my ſight,
In exile you ſhall end an odious life;
Attended only in that friendleſs ſtate
By black Remorſe, which ſtep by ſtep purſues
Th' ungrateful and the falſe.

Arſ. I long have felt
Th' afflicting hand of Heaven, without the guilt
Of murmur or complaint: but to be thought
Falſe and ungrateful, is too much to bear.
Chaſe that ſuſpicion from your royal mind;
Nor caſt my blameleſs innocence a prey
To thoſe who envy your diſtinguiſh'd grace,
With which I've long been honour'd.

Mar. To receive
Private addreſſes from my deadlieſt foe,
A wretch, whoſe dark infernal arts have wrought
The ruin of my race, but ill repays
My condeſcending favour, which vouchſaf'd
To loſe the ſtile of ſubject and of Queen,
In friendſhip's ſofter name.

Arſ. While thus I kneel,
Imploring Heaven t' atteſt my ſpotleſs faith,
May I be fix'd a dreadful monument
Of perjur'd guilt, if e'er my boſom gave
Reception to his ſuit! Were he poſſeſs'd
Of all the ſun ſurveys, and form'd to pleaſe
With every grace that captivates the ſoul;
And your command, concurrent with his love,
Shou'd urge me to comply; that hard command,
And that alone I dare to diſobey.——

No, my dear Roman! nothing can deface
Thy image from thy virgin-widow's breaſt;
Th' inviolable band of ſtrong deſire
Shall ever join our ſouls!

Mar. Diſmiſs your fears,
And let them with my vaniſh'd doubt expire:
But, whence this tranſport of reviving woe?
Recite the ſeries of your fate at large.

Arſ. When Anthony and Cæſar found the globe
Too narrow to ſuffice the boundleſs views
Of two ſuch mighty ſpirits, my virgin-vow
Was plighted to a brave Patrician youth,
The friend of Cæſar: Anthony proſcrib'd
The chiefs who ſided with his potent foe;
And foremoſt in the tablet my lov'd lord
Was doom'd to ſlaughter: whilſt with nuptial joy
His palace rung, crowded with friends who came
T' attend the bride's arrival, through the gates
A troop of cut-throats ruſhing in, ſurpriz'd
And dragg'd him to his fate!

Mar. In that diſtreſs
What cou'd you do, and whither did you fly?

Arſ. At Alexandria then the fatal cauſe
Of Anthony engag'd my father's ſword;
Thither I fled, and was receiv'd with grace
To Cleopatra's train: with her I came
To Paleſtine; where the deteſted ſight
Of Anthony ſo rack'd me, and reviv'd
The ſad remembrance of my murder'd lord,
I begg'd to be diſmiſs'd. You then receiv'd
The fugitive, whom Fortune's rage hath made
Wretched indeed, but hath not power to make
Falſe or ungrateful.

Mar. Poor Arſinoe!
My favours ſhall deface the memory
Of paſt afflictions. On a foul ſecure
In native innocence, or grief or joy
Shou'd make no deeper prints than air retains;
Where fleet alike the vulture and the dove,
And leave no trace. Blind Fortune that beſtows

The periſhable toys of wealth and power,
At random oft reſumes them, pleas'd to make
A hurricane of life: but the firm mind
Safe on exalted virtue reigns ſedate,
Superior to the giddy whirles of Fate. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II. SCENE I.

Enter NARBAL *and* FLAMINIUS.

NARBAL.

THE Queen will ſee you, Sir: a juſt regard
To Cæſar's friendſhip is ſo ſacred here,
That though on this high jubilee the court
Suſpends all ſtate-affairs, the Queen vouchſafes
T' admit your meſſage to her royal ear.

Fla. Th' ambaſſadors of Rome never demand
Admiſſion more than once: your king defers
His entry 'till the Queen ſhall execute
What Cæſar's will requires.

Nar. That cauſe alone
Wou'd urge our prompt compliance: for the King
Makes love th' impatient regiſter of time:
In his account each moment ſeems an age,
That keeps him from his Mariamne's arms;
Who well deſerves ſuch paſſion.

Fla. Diſtant fame
Hath pictur'd all her graces on my mind:
Perhaps you've heard of Dellius.

Nar. What! the friend
Of Anthony?

Fla. His qualities diſgrace
The name of friend; but in his ſofter hours
He lik'd him for his elegance of taſte
In luxury and love. I heard him tell,
How once when Anthony in amorous pomp,
With Cleopatra ſail'd along the Nile,
To grieve the proud Egyptian, he produc'd
A miniature of Mariamne's face.

Nar. And what ſaid Anthony?

Fla. With vaſt ſurprize
He view'd each lineament, but yet forbore
To praiſe or blame it, which he knew the Queen
Wou'd ſoon interpret love; but ſoftly ſigh'd,
And ſlipt it in his boſom. Strait her cheeks
Glow'd with an angry bluſh, which faded ſoon,
And left them lilly-pale: breathleſs and faint
She then reclin'd her head, and from his breaſt
Snatch'd what ſhe fear'd might ly too near his heart:
With amorous reluctance while he ſtrove
To gain the raviſh'd prize, ſhe let it fall
(More by deſign than chance) into the Nile:
He ſpringing up to catch it, half o'er-ſet
The gilded barge; and with a ſterner brow,
And haughtier tone, than e'er ſhe knew before,
He cry'd, Your river is too well repaid,
For all the wealth you ow'd——

A MESSENGER *enters to* Narbal.

Meſ. Pheroras, Sir,
Deſires to ſee the Roman General.

Nar. Sir, I'll conduct you. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Enter SOHEMUS *and the* HIGHPRIEST.

Soh. But the human mind,
When 'tis divorc'd from matter, cannot pierce
The diſtant cloud of dark futurity.
You ſleep not ſound, my Lord; old age, depreſs'd
With melancholy damps, oft dwindles down
To ſecond infancy, and then renews
Its cradle dreams; which ſuperſtitious fear
Makes ſacred with the venerable names
Of viſion, or of prophecy; devis'd
To cheat the vulgar, and too oft employ'd
To cover diſaffection to the ſtate.

Highp. I have, my Lord, no craving appetites
To glut with gain or titles; I've attain'd
The higheſt name my order can receive.
I bear no ſymptoms of a fev'riſh ſoul,

Which turbulent with guilt, aſpires t' embroil
The ſtate with trait'rous faction: you may think,
I who commend myſelf have brib'd a fool
To be my herald; yet a modeſt man,
T' oppoſe the darts of calumny, may wear
His innocence in ſight; a ſafer ſhield
Than adamant, or gold!

Soh. Your innocence!
Did you not talk of omens, which forbode
Th' impending wrath of heav'n to blaſt the day
Which re-inſtates our monarch on his throne?

Highp. I did, my Lord, and will affirm I ſaw—
Laugh when you've heard me out.

Soh. Well, pray proceed.

Highp. I walk'd this morning in my palmy grove,
Where oft to contemplation I devote
My earlieſt hours: the ſun new-riſing cheer'd
The face of nature with a purple ſmile;
My ſpirits ran as briſk careers of life,
As ever in the careleſs prime of youth;
When iſſuing ſudden from the bowry ſhade,
A beauteous form appear'd, and gliding ſlow,
Approach'd me with a ſoft dejected air;
Then cry'd, I liv'd the brother of your Queen;
And gave a piteous groan.

Soh. Ariſtobulus?

Highp. The ſame, I knew him well.

Soh. Ha!—what?—what more?—
Why, he was drown'd, you know—cou'd I prevent
What heav'n fore-doom'd? my good Lord, did he ſay
That I was acceſſary? why to me
This meſſage from the unapparent ſhades?
Speak——ſpeak——I'll hear it.

Highp. In his hand he wav'd
An airy ſtreamer, like a ſable ſhrowd,
And thus went on: If dire deſigns prevail,
Before yond' eaſt diſplays another dawn,
My ſiſter muſt exchange her robes of ſtate,
For ſuch a weed as this; by wicked arts
Betray'd, and in the ſummer of her days

Cut off by bloody hands! with her will end
The glories of our Aſmonæan line!
Tell what I ſay to Sohemus alone,
Bid him deſiſt.
Soh. I!—what?
Highp. He ſaid no more,
But vaniſh'd from my view.
Soh. 'Tis beſt, my Lord,
To let ſuch ſhadows fleet neglected by;
They argue perturbation in the brain,
Caus'd by black humours; a few hours will prove
That mimic fancy mock'd your dazzl'd ſight
With images of air.
Highp. Whate'er they prove,
I feel my boſom lighter. [*Exit* Highp.
Soh. Thou haſt laid
A gauling weight on mine.

SCENE III.

SALOME *enters to* SOHEMUS.

Sal. How now, my Lord?
What means this pale confuſion in your face?
What makes your hair ſtand briſtling, and your eyes
With gloomy horror glare!
Soh. We cheat the world
With florid outſide, 'till we meet ſurprize;
Then conſcience, working inward like a mole,
Crumbles the ſurface, and reveals the dirt
From which our actions ſpring.
Sal. My Lord, recall
Your wandering reaſon.
Soh. 'Tis in vain to boaſt
That reaſon o'er the paſſions holds the rein,
When quite unmann'd with ſuch a tale——
Sal. What tale?
I met th' Highprieſt; hath he unfolded ought
That ſtrikes with this amazement?
Soh. He reports
A meſſage from the viſionary ſhade
Of young Ariſtobulus; him who claim'd

By lineal right the crown which Herod wears;
To diſembroil the title, whilſt he bath'd
I plung'd him, 'till the ſtifling element
Had quench'd the lamp of life, and charg'd the crime
On faultleſs deſtiny.—What makes you ſmile?

Sal. To ſee a dotard's fiction, or his dream,
A legend, ſuch as nurſeries amuſe
A forward child with, have as ſtrong effect
As plain authentic truth! I've heard you prove
By cleareſt reaſon, that when death reſolves
To its firſt principles the human frame,
That ſubtle vapour then, the boaſted ſoul,
Mingles with common air.

Soh. 'Tis not the faith
Of ſuch fantaſtic forms that quells me thus;
Sudden remorſe for murder'd innocence
Wither'd my reſolution.

Sal. But revenge
Reviving warmth and ſpirit will infuſe,
And make the drooping branches flouriſh fair,
Renew'd in ſecond ſpring. Here Sameas comes,
Whom art and nature exquiſitely form
For glorious miſchief; him we muſt ſecure.

SCENE IV.

SALOME, SOHEMUS, SAMEAS.

Sal. Sameas, I'm pleas'd your merits are preferr'd
To bear the royal cup; Pheroras long
Pleaded in vain for Mariamne's grace.

Sam. If to her grace I ow'd this vital air,
I'd choak myſelf with generous diſdain,
Rather than breathe it: from Pheroras' ſuit
I date my fortunes, and to him devote
Life, conſcience, honour.

Soh. Gratitude is rare!
Moſt, after favours are conferr'd, profeſs
Deep ſenſe of obligation; but when prov'd
In points of niceſt moment, have recourſe
To conſcience, honour, and ſuch trivial phraſe,
T' excuſe defect of duty to their friend:

But ſuch a pure, reſign'd, implicit zeal,
Excites my wonder, and tranſcends my praiſe.
Sam. Pheroras ſaid, my Lord, he'd recommend
To you my poor affairs.
Soh. Doubt not my care;
Read here thy lot. [*Pulls out his tablets.*
Sam. Make Sameas chamberlain——
How can I e'er diſcharge ſo vaſt a debt
Of gratitude!
Soh. How? Should affairs require
Thy hand, it wou'd not ſhrink to cut a throat?
Sam. I've ſuch a ſtrong antipathy to blood,
I ne'er cou'd ſacrifice: but my revenge
Works a more ſecret, and a ſafer way.
No poiſonous herbs, which various climes produce,
No venom of the mine, nor reptile, 'ſcapes
My curious obſervation: I extract
Their ſeveral eſſences, and know their pow'rs,
And times of operation.
Soh. To what uſe!
Had I a dog to be diſpatch'd——
Sam. My art
Delights in nobler quarry.
Soh. Is it ſtanch?
Sam. Point out the game, my Lord, you'll find I dare
Do more than moſt dare think.
Soh. Then ſwear——
Sal. Defer
T' impart your orders till the King's arriv'd;
And meet before the banquet.
Sam. What your will
Enjoins, my duty binds me to perform.
Soh. Proud Queen! the laſt deciſive hour draws on,
Deſtin'd to crown our hope, and end our care:
Aided by this brave friend, whoſe ſoul is ſteel'd
With dauntleſs reſolution, though the ghoſts
Of all her race riſe grinning from the tomb,
And in their cauſe auxiliar furies join;
Intrepid we'll purſue our bold career;
Pitch the ſure toils, and rouze the fated deer. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE V.

MARIAMNE, NARBAL *and* ARSINOE.

Mar. His offspring mortgag'd to redeem his crown!—
The wild Arabians who delight in blood,
Who live promiſcuous, and without reſtraint
Of laws or manners propagate their kind,
With yearning paſſion yet preſerve their young:
Nature on their unpoliſh'd marble prints
Much tenderer ſentiments, than ſome can boaſt
Who call them barbarous.

Nar. In the ſons of kings
The country claims a right; and to preſerve
The quiet and the glory of your realm,
The King complies with Cæſar, and will ſend
The deareſt pledge to firm his royal faith.

Mar. Hard fate of greatneſs, if it thus excludes
A mother's intereſt in the babe ſhe bore!
Kings to their country owe their deareſt care
In council or in arms; let that ſuffice;
The choiceſt bleſſings of indulgent Heav'n,
Their children, are reſerv'd a private right,
To ſoften and ſupport their public toils.
But, ſend the Prince to Rome! which ſtill ferments
With fierce inteſtine factions, ever known
To ſheath, but not to lay the ſword aſide:
I cannot bear it!——Now, the ball of pow'r,
Which has been bandy'd long from ſide to ſide,
Is graſp'd by Cæſar: ſoon, ſuperior force
May wreſt it from his hand: who'll then adhere
To Cæſar's cauſe? Will Herod?——He, be ſure,
Wou'd plan new meaſures to preſerve the crown:
And his deſertion, doubtleſs, wou'd provoke
Cæſar to puniſh, in extreme revenge,
Th' offending father in the guiltleſs ſon.

Nar. The blood of Julius is aton'd; and Rome,
Like a tir'd lioneſs which long has ſtood
The hunter's ſpear, lyes quiet in her den
To heal her wounds: Cæſar himſelf aſpires,
With all his conqueſts, only to be ſtyl'd

His Country's father; and the ſenate bears
The fame pacific temper.——But, ſuppoſe
Another Brutus rouze another war,
And Tyber ſhine again with civil arms:
Though Herod then ſhould draw the ſword, and turn
The point on Cæſar; yet the ſacred laws
Of empires, wou'd preſerve the Prince's life
Inviolably ſafe.

Mar. But, were revenge
Employ'd (as ſure it wou'd) t' expound thoſe laws;
Then, what bold caſuiſt would appear, to oppoſe
The ſenſe of Cæſar's legions? Wrong and right
In this bad age are meaſur'd by ſucceſs:
The blackeſt crime from Fortune's golden light
Receives a beauteous gloſs——But grant him ſafe,
As in the circle of his mother's arms;
Rome may pervert his infant age to kneel
Before her idol-ſhrines, and from our law
Apoſtatize to worſhip fabled gods:
And though I hold his life and ſafety dear,
Far dearer than my own, I'd ſee him caſt
Amidſt her amphitheatre a prey,
Mangl'd, and quiv'ring in the famiſh'd jaws
Of ſavages much rather than behold
His body at her heathen altars bow'd,
In impious adoration.

Nar. Leave th' event
To Heav'n's high care! The King muſt be obey'd.
If you conteſt the terms, to which his crown
And honour ſtand engag'd, the vain attempt
Might only ſerve to leſſen that exceſs
Of dear affection which he bears you now.
Then Sohemus, our prime ſtate-engineer,
Might ſee his art ſucceed beyond his hope,
T' atchieve your fall, and make this beauteous pile
A heap of mighty ruin!

Mar. Could you feel
The ſtrong emotions of a mother's woe,
When raviſh'd from her lov'd one, who hath liv'd
Moſt in her ſight, and ever in her ſoul;

Not all the wounds which Fortune is empower'd
T' inflict, nor inſtant death, would move your mind
Amid his dangers to regard your own.
Ev'n life, that dear ennobling gift of Heav'n,
Which, in the order of creation, ranks
The paleſt glow-worm's animated ray
Above the brighteſt ſtar, with me will loſe
Its boaſted value when I loſe my child:
With him I truly liv'd, his preſence crown'd
The day with pleaſure, and the night with peace.
Then breath, conſum'd in ſighs, will not deſerve
The name of life! theſe roofs ſhall only ſound
With moanful accents, ſad as murm'ring winds,
Which through the clefts of ruin'd cloiſters roar:
Such muſic beſt will pleaſe the mother's ear,
If in a diſtant land her tender ſon
Muſt weep the rigour of a foreign lord,
With no kind friend to pity or revenge
The wrong he there ſuſtains!

Nar. I'll wait the Prince,
To guard his helpleſs age, and ſhare his fate;
And for a pledge of conſtant faith, receive
(Though much unequal, yet of deareſt price
To him who gives it!) for a pledge receive
Thoſe precious legacies which that bright ſaint,
My dying wife bequeath'd me!—If the Prince
Shall feel th' effects of violence or fraud;
If e'er I ceaſe with duteous care to ſhield
From guilt his manners, from reproach his fame;
Or fail to baniſh from his penſive breaſt
Each anxious thought, and cheriſh gentle joys;
Slay both my ſons!

Mar. Then go, Arſinoe, go——
Hither conduct the Prince. [*Exit* Arſinoe.

SCENE VI.

MARIAMNE, NARBAL.

Mar. Oh happineſs!
Thou gaudy bubble, which delud'ſt the graſp,
Whene'er we ſtrive to keep thee moſt ſecure!

Have I been fond of Fortune's faithleſs ſmile,
Cruel, diſdainful, to deſerve this doom?
Did e'er I ſuffer pride to bar my ear
Againſt the widow's cry? Did e'er I view
The weeping orphan's anguiſh, and with-hold
The hand of liberal mercy from their woes?
Or did I with uncharitable ſcorn
Ever upbraid the childleſs womb, or wiſh
The wrathful blaſt of Heaven t' attaint the fruit
Of my moſt deadly foe?—Whence then to me
This undeſerv'd diſtreſs? why muſt I bear
So deep a wound in ſuch a tender part?
More wretched than the meaneſt of my ſex.
Who call me Queen! they loſe the cares of life,
Amid the bleſſings of a dear increaſe;
A bliſs deny'd to me!

Nar. When foreign foes
Are quell'd by Caſar, and the provinces
Avow their homage to the laws of Rome,
And with conſummate peace her arms are crown'd,
The Prince will be reſtor'd, and, in exchange,
Some of our nobleſt youth will be receiv'd
For hoſtages of friendſhip.

Mar. That exchange
Will come too late to bleſs my longing eyes;
They'll firſt be cloſ'd in death! a thouſand ills
Riſe in black views to my divining ſoul!

Enter ARSINOE *with the* Prince.

And muſt I loſe thee!—Oh!—thou ſweeteſt pledge
Of Heav'n's indulgence to a mother's pray'r!
Muſt the ſole comfort of my cares become
The cauſe of endleſs grief? alas! no more
Muſt I with tender tranſport claſp thee thus!
No more muſt theſe deſiring eyes be fix'd
In ſilent joy, with gazing on thy charms!
Arſinoe, oh! ſupport me——I've a ſon
To think on only, and to pay a tear
For every wounding thought.—O Narbal!—now
Obey the King, by whom the dearer names
Of huſband, and of father, are forgot!

Obey the King—let the rude hand of Pow'r
Tear from my breaſt the bloſſom of my joys——
Yet let me bleſs him——All thy wants of me
May pitying angels with their aid ſupply!
Waft all thy pray'rs to Heav'n! which Heav'n approve,
And crown with bleſſings of eternal love! [*Exeunt.*

ACT III. SCENE I.

Enter FLAMINIUS *and* NARBAL.

FLAMINIUS.

UNHAPPY Queen! 'till now I never griev'd
T' obey my Emperor.

Nar. A while ſhe ſtood
Transform'd by grief to marble, and appear'd
Her own pale monument: but when ſhe breath'd
The ſecret anguiſh of her wounded ſoul,
So moving were the plaints, they would have ſooth'd
The ſtooping falcon to ſuſpend his flight,
And ſpare his morning prey: thus, nature ſoon
Exhauſted, ſpiritleſs, had need of art
To reſpite or aſſwage her troubled thoughts;
Then her phyſicians with the opiate charm
Of gentle ſleep her fainting ſenſes bound,
And huſh'd the warring paſſions into peace.

Fla. Give me, ye gods, the harmony of war,
The trumpet's clangor, and the claſh of arms;
That conſort animates the glowing breaſt
To ruſh on death; but when our ear is pierc'd
With the ſad notes which mournful beauty yields,
Our manhood melts in ſympathiſing tears.

Nar. Heavens! is it juſt that Mariamne's fate
Claims the ſad tribute of a tender tear?
She, ſhe! whoſe gentle goodneſs ſtrives to chace
Afflictions from mankind: I've ſeen her weep.
When the fierce hounds have bay'd the panting ſtag,
'Till the big drops roll'd from his pleading eyes,
And none dar'd let the fatal jav'lin fly
Before ſhe left the field.

SCENE II.

To them ARSINOE *enters with the* Prince.

Arſ. To you, my Lord, [*To* Nar.
The Queen at length reſigns this royal charge;
Judea's other hope! the deareſt pledge
Of ſacred faith that monarch can beſtow.

Fla. Gods!—'tis not poſſible!—they've only form'd
Thoſe beauties in the ſame celeſtial mold——
Exact ſimilitude of ſhape and air!

Nar. What may this mean, Flaminius?

Arſ. Do I wake?
Or does deluding Fancy lead me ſtill
In new fantaſtic labyrinths of bliſs?

Fla. The face and harmony of voice the ſame!

Nar. You're loſt in admiration and ſurprize:
Reveal the cauſe.

Fla. Oh, Sir!——I once was bleſt
With ſuch a lovely object of my flame!
Beauty and goodneſs in her heavenly form
Held equal empire: Oh!

Nar. What cruel fate
Sever'd your hearts, ſo tender, and ſo true,
That ſtill the wound bleeds freſh?

Fla. The violence
Of civil diſcord ſnatch'd her from my arms:
But the laſt pang of death alone hath pow'r
To tear the beauteous image from my breaſt!
She liv'd the grace of Cleopatra's court,
And ſhar'd her fall!—As her high merits claim'd
My earlieſt love, to her I pay my laſt:
My paſſion for the ſex expir'd, and lyes
In dear Hortenſia's tomb!

Arſ. Hortenſia lives! [*She runs into his arms.*
Lives only for Flaminius—Lives to crown
Such matchleſs conſtancy!

Fla. Hath fate rejoin'd
Our long-divided hearts!——'Tis ſhe!——I know
[*She ſhows her ring.*
That pledge of our eſpouſals, where expreſs'd

The virgin-phœnix riſeth from the flames:
Th' inſcription was prophetic of thy fate,
Another and the ſame.
Arſ. But ever thine!
Will not this joy, as all my former, fleet
Like the light vapour of a morning dream?——
Fla. Rap'd from myſelf, my ſenſes are oppreſt
With ruſhing ecſtacies; Oh, I could ſtand
And gaze for ever on thy heavenly charms,
In ſpeechleſs tranſport, which too big for words
Swells in my heaving heart!
Arſ. How did you 'ſcape
Th' aſſaſſinates whom Anthony employ'd:
To take your head?
Fla. My Phædria, by the crime
Of fortune born a ſlave (for ſure his ſoul
Was of the nobleſt order) wou'd aſſume
My habit and my name; his features, age,
And ſtature well befriending the deceit;
And thus diſguis'd, his honeſt heart receiv'd
The wounds they meant for me.
Arſ. O wondrous faith!
Fla. But now, for Rome, Hortenſia!——
Nar. Madam, pay
The Queen a laſt farewell, in whom you found
The kindeſt miſtreſs, and the beſt of friends.
Arſ. I will, my Lord; and——
Fla. Hark! the trumpet ſpeaks
The King's approach, our ſignal to depart:
I now muſt leave thee to ſecure the Prince,
As Cæſar gave command: but near the walls
My troops are tented in the weſtern vale;
Where meditating on my bliſsful change,
I'll watch impatient for the purple dawn;
Thither you come?
Arſ. Though grinning ſavages
Oppos'd my ſpeed, I'd ruſh intrepid on.
From clime to clime, where-ever glory calls,
I'll wait my warrior; pleas'd with thee to paſs
The frozen Danube, or the ſun-burnt Nile:

And though my ſex denies me to partake
The dangers of the field; with ardent vows
I'll beg each tutelary pow'r, to ſpread
Protection round thee in the cloud of war.
But if relentleſs to my pray'r they prove,
And thou art fated in the fight to fall,
I'll follow faſt the ſoul of my deſire,
And by the wound, that pierc'd my Lord, expire.

[*Exeunt*, Arſinoe *on one ſide of the ſtage, the reſt on the other.*

SCENE III.

SALOME, SOHEMUS.

Sal. In the high mantling tide of grief and rage,
Sure when the King arrives, her cold diſdain
Will damp the glowing ardour of his ſoul.

Soh. Fear not a calm! the cloud will now collect
More vapours ſtill, to give a nobler burſt,
And make her ruin ſure. When vulgar minds
Deſpond, they drop beneath the ſtroke of fate,
With no more tumult than autumnal leaves
Forſake the ſapleſs bough: but, majeſty
With noiſe and pompous horror ruſhes down;
As if the violence of nature tore
A planet from its orb.

SCENE IV.

To them PHERORAS *enters.*

Pher. The pomp of kings
At their triumphal entries, moving ſlow
To warlike ſymphonies, and claſhing arms;
When from the field, with bloody laurels crown'd,
They come victorious, gives a mingled joy:
For pity, when the captive train appears,
Oft with a ſilent penſive gloom obſcures
The luſtre of the triumph. But no cloud
Saddens this feſtival: from the white tow'r
I heard with rapture how the loyal tribes,
In mighty confluence hail'd the King's return;
So long, ſo loud, that floating on the ſound,
The bird of heavieſt wing with eaſe had ſoar'd

Beyond the towring eagle's utmoſt flight,
Up-borne by gales of joy. [*Flouriſh.*
Soh. My Lord, the King!——

SCENE V.

HEROD *paſſeth over the ſtage with attendants, &c. they all kneel.*

Pher. O King, for ever live! the dear defence,
And grace of Paleſtine.
Sal. May this bleſt day
Tincture with happineſs and bright renown,
All your ſucceeding years!
Soh. And ſure there's none,
To whom this day can give ſincerer joy,
Than to your faithful Sohemus; who kneels
To give this ſeal of delegated power
Back to your royal hand.
Her. Let all who ſigh
In gloomy dungeons, preſt with gauling chains,
Shake off their bondage; and conſpire to tune
The wholeſome breath of heav'n to ſongs of praiſe.
Tell them they owe their freedom to the Queen:
Her temper is compaſſionate and kind,
As guardian angels are: but I, conſtrain'd
By the ſad exigence of ſtate, have torn
Our tender offspring from her fond embrace;
And heap'd afflictions on the brighteſt head
That ever wore a crown!
Pher. But your approach
Will ſooth her grief, and ſoften the ſurprize.
Her. I, I am the ſole cauſe of all her grief!
Ambition ruſhing forwards, hath diſturb'd
My ſweeteſt fountain of domeſtic bliſs!
It promis'd ſcepters, but hath fill'd my graſp
With gilded thorns! wanting my Queen, the court
Appears as loneſome as the dreary waſte,
Where Peſtilence and Famine, hand in hand,
Have lately reign'd: but, Mariamne's ſmiles
Diffuſive of their good, around her caſt
On all the ſhining circle beams of joy;

When from the wars ſhe welcom'd my return,
With tears of tender tranſport in her eyes.
Such oft our meetings were; but, diſmal change!
The fair offended ſeems to ſhun me now:
How ſhall I calm the tempeſt of her ſoul! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.

The SCENE *opening, diſcovers* MARIAMNE *aſleep, and* ARSINOE *attending:* HEROD *enters, and goes to the Queen; then comes with* Arſinoe *to the fore part of the ſtage.*

Her. I kiſs'd her ſoftly, and ſhe gave a ſigh!
Tears make her cheek feel like a damaſk roſe,
Wet with cold evening dew.

Arſ. Sleep ill performs
His gentle office when conſtrain'd by art:
Her ſudden ſtarts, and broken murmurs ſhew
The diſcompoſure of unpleaſing dreams.

Her. Muſic ſhall wake her: that hath power to charm
Pale Sickneſs, and avert the ſtings of Pain:
But, ever on the mind the ſure effects
Are moſt conſpicuous where the varied notes
Can raiſe or quell our paſſions, and becalm
In ſweet oblivion the too wakeful ſenſe
Of grief, or love; and print a dimpled ſmile
On the green bloodleſs cheek of dumb Deſpair.
Such pow'rful ſtrains bid Harmony reſound:
Such as good ſpirits are ſuppos'd to ſing
O'er ſaints, while Death diſſolves the union-band,
And frees them from the fretful dream of life. [*Ex.* Arſ.
Here will I watch the day-break of her eyes:
O may they dart warm rays of cordial love,
And wake to peace and joy!

[*Soft muſic is heard behind the Scenes:* Arſinoe *returns to* Herod, *who ſtands looking on* Mariamne: *after the muſic is ceas'd, ſhe begins to ſpeak.*

Mar. Good angels guard me!——
Murder attaints not me——

Her. Ah, gentle ſoul!——

Mar. The man of blood is juſtly doom'd to bleed——

I ne'er ſhed any——When I was a child
I kill'd a linnet, but indeed I wept:
Heav'n viſits not for that.——O! 'tis my Lord!——
He's poiſon'd! dead! dead!—and each manly grace
Cover'd with purple ſpots!

Her. Theſe frightful dreams
With their fantaſtic imag'ry amaze
The mind as much as the moſt hideous form
Of real horror.

Arſ. Sir, ſhe wakes.

Mar. The King!

Her. My deareſt Queen!—The faireſt and the beſt
That ever bore the name!

Mar. I'm chang'd of late,
Alas! much chang'd——

Her. No, thou art ſtill the ſame;
The ſame bright ſhrine where virtue dwells, to charm
Thoſe who contemn her moſt.

Mar. Cou'd I have charm'd
Ambition from your breaſt, I had not mourn'd
The deareſt object of maternal love,
Torn from this bleeding heart; where he poſſeſs'd
So large a place, that Fortune is too poor,
With all her vaſt variety of joys,
To fill the gloomy void!—My life is ſpun
At leaſt this day too long, which ſhews you chang'd,
And from a loving lord grown moſt unkind!

Her. Unkind!—Your fancy cannot form a wiſh,
But I ſhou'd crown it; and reproach my heart,
For having not prevented your requeſt.
Was ever ſoul ſo ſenſible of love,
As mine hath been for you! and who but you
Cou'd e'er deſerve ſuch love? I never err'd:
Witneſs, ye Heavens! and with your thunder rend
This heart if e'er it err'd! if e'er I ſtain'd
The purity of paſſion, or in thought
Wander'd from Mariamne.——

Mar. In your breaſt
I could have ſpar'd your ſon a little ſpace;
But ſure you lov'd him not.

Her. What! am I form'd
Like monumental marbles, and receive
The name of father from the ſculptor's art,
And features of the rock? Am I ſo dead
To the ſweet cares that fathers ought to feel?——
An old man's rapture when he firſt beholds
A new-born heir, when years of fruitleſs hope
Have led him childleſs to the verge of life,
Cannot ſurpaſs thoſe dear paternal joys,
Which my fond boſom from my ſon receiv'd.

Mar. Yet you reſign'd him for a prey to Rome,
With leſs reluctance!——

Her. Cæſar would allow
Of no alternate to preſerve our crown.
Suppliant I long entreated him, to name
What other teſt of ſacred faith he pleas'd:
But frowning with a victor's haughty air,
He pointed to a picture on the wall;
Whoſe ſilent eloquence too plainly ſpoke
His fix'd reſolve againſt the ſuit I urg'd.

Mar. What picture?

Her. Perſeus led in chains through Rome:
Where the ſad fate of Macedon appear'd
Prophetic of our own, ſhou'd we like her
Boaſt a falſe vigour, and provoke the rage
Of Rome, unequal to ſuſtain her arms.
There Fancy figur'd to my mournful eyes,
The wealth of Paleſtine in chargers pil'd:
Our ſhields and ſpears in moving trophies hung,
Ingloriouſly revers'd: and then ſucceed
Nobles, and matrons, with a virgin train,
In long proceſſion through th' unpitying crowd:
But, oh! what ſtings of grief and horror pierc'd
My agonizing heart, when there I view'd
A royal captive, far tranſcending all
In matchleſs beauty and majeſtic woe,
Her form reſembling thine! On her a throng
Of gay patricians fix'd their wond'ring eyes,
Enamour'd; and with rival paſſion ſtrove,
Who firſt ſhould proſtrate to his brutal joys

Her unpolluted charms. Thy future doom
Thus pictur'd to my view, ſo wrapt my ſoul
In clouds of deep deſpair, I ſtrait comply'd
To give the filial pledge.

Mar. Juſt Heav'n, exact
With ſtrict account, from Cæſar's rigid heart,
A pang, for every pang that tortures mine!
May public diſcord and domeſtic jars
Make his ſhort reign a ſtormy winter's day!
And may his children with diſhoneſt ſhame
Redden his hoary cheek; and wound his ſoul
With keener anguiſh than their mother bore
Amid her fierceſt throes!

Her. Leave him t'enjoy
The deſtiny allotted, and reſtrain
Your paſſionate complaints, which but foment
A grief much greater than the cauſe requires.

Mar. Your ſtrange inſenſibility foments
My wonder more; what grief's more rational,
Or what can equal mine, whoſe darling hope
Is raviſh'd in the tender dawn of life
By ſavages? A miſcreant haughty race!
Who with hereditary hate purſue
The name of monarch; and from us diſſent
In manners, habit, ſpeech, religion, laws.
There my poor infant, like a beauteous flow'r
Tranſplanted to a cold unfriendly ſoil,
Muſt droop neglected! What protecting hand
Will there with tender delicacy guard
His op'ning bloom? Ah, none!—He there muſt live
A friendleſs exile; he! whoſe menial train
Nobles were proud to grace, and all conſpir'd
To make his hours in downy circles dance,
And ſooth his ſoul to joy, muſt now endure——
Alas! what not endure!

Her. The Roman name
Is far renown'd for all the ſofter arts
Which poliſh life, and with enobling grace
Illuſtrate virtue. Wou'd you but attend,
The voice of reaſon dictates to our choice

The deed which ſtrong neceſſity conſtrains.
What court but that of Rome cou'd form his mind
By ſureſt maxims, ere he mounts the throne,
To guide the reigns of empire?—Thus of old,
Philip from his dejected realm was ſent,
A tender hoſtage to the Theban ſtate:
Where founding his high virtue on the plan
Of great Epaminondas, he reveng'd
The wrongs of Macedon, and ſoon reduc'd
More than a hundred potentates.

Mar. The deeds
Of my heroic anceſtors might fire
My ſon, t'aſcend the laurel'd heights of fame,
Without a Roman guide. If he purſues
With equal ſteps the glorious paths they trod;
Like them he'll awe the nations round, and reign
Honour'd in peace, and terrible in war.
Were he of growth in radiant ſteel to lead
The files of war againſt his country's foe;
No ſoft emaſculating tear ſhould ſtain
The luſtre of his arms: I'd gird the ſword
On the young warrior's thigh, and ſend him forth,
Reſolv'd to conquer in ſo juſt a cauſe,
Or dauntleſs in her dear defence to fall.

Her. Why then regret you, with this rage of grief,
The happier triumphs of auſpicious peace
Which he beſtows? For none but he had pow'r
T'avert the furies of invaſive war:
For that ſole pledge, Judæa ſmiles to ſee
Soft Quiet ſpreading wide her turtle wings
O'er all her bounds; and him we both muſt own
The guardian of our crown.

Mar. The crown is bought
Far, far too dear, with ſuch a precious bribe!
Preſerv'd by mean ſubmiſſion to the frown
Of alien ſtates, what's he who wears it more
Than a vain idol of imperial pow'r,
Which moves ſubſervient to the maſter hand,
No freedom left to will? Had Cæſar urg'd
This haughty mandate, when the realm obey'd

The founders of my Aſmonæan race;
They wou'd have plum'd his eagles on the field!
Her. I neither envy, nor defame the dead;
Peace to their honour'd ſhades! Nor ſhou'd you praiſe
Their actions, only in reproach to mine;
That's too ſevere—When they the ſceptre ſway'd,
Rome had not ſtretch'd the terror of her arms,
From far Euphrates, and the conquer'd Eaſt,
To Luſitania and th' Atlantic main.
If they reign'd now, their prudence wou'd inſpire
The ſame pacific councils I purſue;
Since her vaſt pow'r makes all reſiſtance vain:
Vain as the fury which a wintry ſtorm
Diſchargeth on the ſea, whoſe waves enjoy
Th' impetuous ruin of the ruſhing clouds,
And ſwell with prouder ſtate.——Alas! thy breaſt
Still heaves with ſighs! Forbear!—My heart repays
Each tear with drops of blood!—Provoke not Heav'n,
By violating, with ſuperfluous grief,
The brighteſt image of itſelf, impreſs'd
On thy reſembling graces.
Mar. Though my tears
Equall'd the dew-drops of the weeping morn,
My fate requires them all!—His infant-charms
Sweetly ſupply'd your abſence, and beguil'd
My widow'd hours, whene'er the voice of war
Call'd you to diſtant camps!———
Her. If ev'ry ſtar
Contain'd a golden world, and bounteous Heav'n
Wou'd make me lord of all, I'd not forſake
My Mariamne, to receive the boon.
My abſence never ſhall afflict thee more.
The blaze of glory, whoſe deluding light
Miſled me from thy arms, ſhall now be loſt
In love's ſuperior flame: Pheroras train'd
In Roman camps, and perfected in arms,
Shall have the conduct of our future wars.
And now, thou deareſt treaſure of my ſoul!
Prepare with every ſmiling grace t'adorn
The feſtival; and let victorious joy

Chaſe every black idea from thy mind:
For ever baniſh from thy gentle breaſt
All cares, except the pleaſing cares of love!
Be this the prelude of eternal peace,
And mutual paſſion with our years increaſe! [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV. SCENE I.

Enter SOHEMUS *and* SALOME.

SOHEMUS.

RESTRAIN this flood of unavailing tears!
For if they flow for pity or remorſe,
They flow in vain. In diſtant ages paſt
Pity dy'd young; of grief, they ſay, to ſee
An eagle wreak his malice on a wren.
If ſhe were yet on earth, where cou'd ſhe find
A nobler palace than a brother's breaſt?
But there you found her not; the more's the ſhame!
Since Pity's fled to heav'n, we'll ſend Remorſe
To howl in hell; it has no buſineſs here!——
But if theſe tears flow from the nobler ſource
Of indignation, and the generous ſhame
Of injur'd merit; if they reliſh ſtrong
The bitterneſs of ſoul from which they ſtream;
O, let encreaſing fury ſwell the tide,
Ev'n whilſt we put in act our great revenge!
So weeps the ſtorm, while the devouring waves
Cloſe o'er the wrecks it made.

Sal. Had I not ſeen
His cheek diſcolour'd, when his paſſion foam'd;
And heard him thunder threats of inſtant death
To me, and all whoſe generous ſpirits ſcorn
To bear th' oppreſſion of his haughty queen;
I never had believ'd myſelf ſo loſt
To his affection.

Soh. Loſt! he lov'd you not;
Ambition is the miſtreſs of his ſoul:
The Queen herſelf holds but the ſecond place:
To pleaſe that miſtreſs he condemn'd to die

All the wife's kindred; now, to pleaſe the wife,
His own muſt bleed: greatneſs hath made him deaf
To nature's voice, ev'n while ſhe pleads for you.

Sal. The wretch who in an earthquake ſees the ground
Heave like a ſwelling wave before it gapes
To ſink him to the centre, ſtands as ſafe,
As I ſo near the tyrant?

Soh. In his court,
On theſe ſad terms at beſt you but enjoy
A priſon of ſtate. When rival princes laid
Their ſceptres at your feet, the Queen prevail'd
To have each honourable ſuit refus'd.

Sal. Revenge no more ſhall grovel in the dark,
But fan with dragon-wings the face of day;
Oppoſe her courſe who can! It is reſolv'd——

Soh. Once Mariamne was the deſtin'd prey;
But ſince her charms enthrall the king as faſt,
As in the freſhneſs of her bridal love,
They both ſhall die.

Sal. Yes, both; and all their friends
At once deſcending crowd the gates of night:
For ſelf-defence will ſanctify the deed:
And fame, th' officious herald of ſucceſs,
Will blazon our renown;—And tho' we fail,
'Tis great to dare.

Soh. When thoſe proud cedars fall,
Their ſpreading ruin will deſtroy the ſhrubs
Which flouriſh in their ſhade.——And lo, the man!
Whom fate ſelects t'atchieve her high decree.

SCENE II.

To them SAMEAS *enters.*

Sal. This diamond, Sameas, but prepares the way
For future favours. [*Gives him a jewel.*

Sam. Your auſpicious ſmiles,
Madam, o'erpay my ſervice.

Soh. Sameas, wait
A while in my apartment, and I come
T'inſtruct you further to deſerve her grace. [*Exit* Sam.

SCENE III.

Sal. The diamond which I gave him is the Queen's;
Arſinoe lent it, for the jeweller
To model one for me,
Soh. It ſure will prove
Of deareſt value now: I was amaz'd
To ſee you give an earneſt of ſuch price,
To one whoſe genuine malice renders vice
Its own reward, and kills for killing ſake.
Sal. The wretch is avaricious; we muſt feed
The appetite of wealth, which urg'd him firſt
To trade in death.
Soh. How urg'd?
Sal. Along the ſhore
He walk'd one ev'ning, when the clamorous rage
Of tempeſts wreck'd a ſhip: the crew were ſunk,
The maſter only reach'd the neighb'ring ſtrand,
Borne by a floating fragment; but, ſo weak
With combating the ſtorm, his tongue had loſt
The faculty of ſpeech, and yet for aid
He faintly wav'd his hand, on which he wore
A fatal jewel. Sameas, quickly charm'd
Both by its ſize and luſtre, with a look
Of pity, ſtoop'd to take him by the hand;
Then cut the finger off to gain the ring,
And plung'd him back to periſh in the waves;
Crying, Go dive for more.——I've heard him boaſt
Of this adventure.
Soh. He's a very fiend!
If we ſucceed, he ſhall not live an hour,
In mercy to ourſelves: his poiſoning art
In time would taint the vital breath of ſpring;
And ſpread contagion with each ſpicy gale——

A MESSENGER *enters.*

Meſ. Lord Hazeroth releas'd, demands to ſee
Your Lordſhip—— [*Exit.*
Soh. Me?
Sal. Receive him; I retire.

SCENE IV.

Enter HAZEROTH *and* SOHEMUS.

Haz. The King, I thank his grace! vouchſafes me leave
To breathe a freer air, than what was judg'd
Fit for my conſtitution; though the terms
Of freedom are ſevere.
Soh. What terms, my Lord?
Haz. To ſue for reconcilement, and receive
In ſacred friendſhip that injurious hand,
Which coop'd me, like a ſtarling in a cage:
You know the man.
Soh. My Lord, the man you mean
Bears ſuch devotion to your high deſcent;
That 'tis the favourite paſſion of his ſoul,
To live your humbleſt ſervant——
Haz. And his tongue
Diſtills court-honey, while his heart o'erflows
With quinteſſence of gall!
Soh. That character,
My Lord, with great ſubmiſſion I diſown.
You hear the dictates of an honeſt heart,
That's warm in all your int'reſts.
Haz. You confin'd
My perſon, like a felon's, to promote
My int'reſt! ſtateſmen have peculiar arts;
They're ſo myſterious, few can apprehend
The favours they confer.
Soh. The crime deſerv'd
Severer pennance than the King enjoin'd.
Haz. I thank your majeſty.
Soh. I then, my Lord,
Bore th' expreſs image of the ſov'reign pow'r;
And that's allow'd to dignify the coin,
However mean the metal. Me you brav'd,
With moſt unſeemly licence; but th' affront
Wounded the King: and his prerogative
Reveng'd itſelf, not me.
Haz. Whene'er the ſpleen,
And pride of tools in office are chaſtis'd;

The King's affronted!——'Tis the general cry,
From thoſe who lord it in the Sanhedrim,
To him who drives the camels!

Soh. When, my Lord,
Your ſhining merits meet their juſt reward,
Diſtinguiſh'd with ſome honourable poſt,
As ſoon they muſt, you'll own my doctrine ſound.
Nothing but duty to preſerve the crown
In its full luſtre, 'till the King return'd,
Could urge me to exert an act of power
On you, my Lord, whoſe qualities adorn
Your royal lineage:—but the nobleſt fruits
Have too much tartneſs, 'till the mellowing year
Digeſt their eager juices.

Haz. Youth is apt
T' incur ſuch indiſcretions as the King
Forgave in me, and you, my Lord, forget:
Our friendſhip here begins.

Soh. May death alone
Diſſolve the honour'd tie! [*Exit* Haz.] O Flattery!
How ſoon thy ſmooth inſinuating oil
Supples the tougheſt fool. [*Exit* Soh.

SCENE V.

Enter MARIAMNE *and* ARSINOE.

Mar. With leſs regret
I can ſupport your abſence, ſince my ſon
Will find ſo kind a guardian, to diſcharge
The dear engagements that a mother owes;
We differ but in name.

Arſ. The Prince ſhall be
The tender object of my hourly care;
Happy that Fate reſerves it in my power
T' expreſs the ſenſe my grateful heart retains
Of royal favour!

Mar. Nature form'd our ſex
For ſoft endearing offices: ſhe ſtarts,
When Pity is depos'd, and cruel pride
Uſurps the vacant throne. Alas! you ſee
How deep the darts of Fortune wound the great,
Though clad in golden armour. Were you ſway'd

By favours in reverſion, which allure
Ev'n vulgar ſouls to ſuccour the diſtreſs'd;
Int'reſt would tell you, that your darling ſon
May want a friend, and then, my tender plant,
In the full verdure of his royal growth,
May recompenſe your kind protecting care,
And ſhield him from a ſtorm.——Is the time fix'd
For your departure?

Arſ. Sohemus intends
T' obtain the royal mandate, to delay
My journey with my Lord: then all my joys,
Like the falſe colours of the ſhow'ry bow,
Will fade in tears!

Mar. The politician's art
Muſt ſo revenge his diſappointed love!
His ſpider conſtitution would diſſolve
In its own venom, if he ſhould forbear
To ſpin it off in crafty dark intrigues,
Pernicious to my peace, and thoſe I love.
Before the banquet thou ſhalt quit the court,
Then let Flaminius vindicate his claim,
And by this prompt compliance with your Lord,
Form all your future conduct; and effect
The pow'r to pleaſe, and not to give him pain;
For, wedded love is founded on eſteem,
Which the fair merits of the mind engage;
For thoſe are charms which never can decay;
But time, which gives new whiteneſs to the ſwan,
Improves their luſtre.

Arſ. None of human race
Would live more happy, could we but tranſcribe
The bright example of a royal pair:
If my Flaminius ever would reward
My conſtant ardour with an equal flame;
Engag'd by ſuch endearing decencies
As make the lamp of love in Herod's breaſt
To burn ſo bright as never to conſume.

Mar. Beware of flatt'ry! 'tis a flow'ry weed,
Which oft offends the very idol Vice,
Whoſe ſhrine it would perfume.

Arſ. But rigid truth

Turns praiſe to incenſe, which the niceſt ſenſe
Of virtue may receive——In your ſoft chains
Your captive lord is led from joy to joy:
Days, months, and years, in circling raptures roll,
And each advancing hour outſhines the paſt.
None, none but he can ſuch a treaſure boaſt,
Rich in perfections, able to ſuffice
His avarice of love!

Mar. When hearts are join'd
In virtuous union, love's impartial beams
Gild the low cottage of the faithful ſwain
With equal warmth, as when he darts his fires
On canopies of ſtate.

Arſ. The danger's fled,
And now I may diſcloſe a ſtronger proof
Of Herod's paſſion, than the long records
Of love contain.

Mar. What proof!—a dangerous proof
Conceal'd from me!

Arſ. When Cæſar's mounted beams
Prevail'd o'er Anthony's inferior ſtar,
He thought the victor, in ſevere revenge,
Would take both life and crown; his life and crown
Were toys beneath his care; but, oh! what pangs
He felt, reflecting that your death alone
Cou'd ſave your beauties to himſelf entire!
How vaſt a paſſion his, who could not bear
A rival in the grave!

Mar. How! Did the King
To the red hand of Slaughter doom the breaſt
Of once-love'd Mariamne?——Gave command
This breaſt ſhould bleed, where never dwelt a thought
Diſloyal or unkind!——Had other lips
Breath'd forth this fatal truth, it would appear
The dictate of inventive ſpleen, diſclos'd
To violate my peace: but you're ſincere,
And knowing that, I know myſelf undone!

Arſ. O that I had been born like Nature's mutes
That ſwim the ſilent deep!——Believe me falſe;
Or elſe with me believe the King's decree
A teſt of wond'rous love and dear eſteem!

Mar. Love and eſteem!——

Arſ. Alas! rekindling rage
Glows on your cheek, and ſparkles in your eyes:——
Think me perfidious, or diſtruſt the pow'r
And evidence of ev'ry faithful ſenſe,
Rather than doubt yourſelf the worſhip'd ſhrine
Of his fond ſoul, and treaſure of his joys.

Mar. To diſſipate my doubt, recite the whole
Without evaſions.

Arſ. When he went to Rhodes,
He thus to Sohemus his charge addreſs'd:
If I to Cæſar's rage a victim fall,
Let not my beauteous Queen ſurvive, to grace
The victor's triumphs, or to crown his love;
Let me ly envy'd in the grave, poſſeſs'd
Of Mariamne there! a happier doom
Than 'tis to live the world's imperial lord
Without my queen, or rival'd in my love.

Mar. Whene'er did Cruelty aſſume a look
So ſmooth and fair before?—To ſummon death,
And arm the terror with a dart of love,
Againſt his Queen! his wife! whoſe ardent vows,
Inceſſant pray'r, and ſacrifice, implor'd
Th' unutterable Name, to make his head
White as the flow'ring almond, with increaſe
Of proſp'rous days; that ages yet unborn
Might bow before his throne, and bleſs his pow'r,
When I ly unlamented and forgot,
A little heap of duſt: and this return!——
A ſad return indeed!

Arſ. Call it deſpair,
And fear of loſing what his ſoul adores.
Our deeds receive their colour from the will;
His tongue was cruel, but his heart was kind,
And Rigour was, at worſt, the ſudden child
Of Grief, and bore a fix'd but melting eye;
Or if a crime, the crime of boundleſs love.

Mar. Good Heav'n! that baſe perfidious creature, man!——
With what diſſembled agonies of grief

He cry'd, Farewell! and fainted in my arms;
I credulouſly fond thought all ſincere!

Arſ. His grief was undiſſembled; but your charms
Have wrought his love to rage.

Mar. If this poor ſtock
Of artleſs beauty hath ſuch fatal pow'r,
When you, Arſinoe, have a daughter born,
Beg all deformities of ſhape and face,
T' inſure her quiet from that monſter, man!
Who quitting reaſon, a celeſtial claim,
To the ſweet harmony of ſouls prefers
A little white and red, the airy food
Of beſtial appetite; and for a cheek,
Whoſe tranſient beauties hardly will outwear
The wardrobe of a flow'r——

Enter a MESSENGER.

Meſ. The King and court
Entreat your Majeſty wou'd come, to grace
The banquet.

Mar. No! I'm indiſpos'd—[*Exit* Meſ.] Now fly,
Arſinoe, fly the meditated ſnare,
Which Sohemus will ſpread; and may your love
In the warm ſmile of Fortune flouriſh fair,
Fruitful of virtuous joys; but if the pow'r
Blaſt with malignant frowns the blooming ſweets,
Abſolve your deſtiny of partial rage;
Think on the wife, the mother, and the queen,
Whoſe heart her hoſtile troops have long beſieg'd:
Think with kind pity on the countleſs ſtore
Of Mariamne's woes, and weep no more. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE VI.

Enter SALOME *alone.*

Sal. I thought my heart was arm'd with adamant
Againſt remorſe; but Nature fools me now;
A faint cold ſhivering ſeizeth ev'ry limb.

SCENE VII.

Enter SOHEMUS.

Sal. My Lord, O breathe ſome cordial to revive
My ſick'ning expectation.

Soh. To defeat
Our purpoſe, Fortune, with malicious joy,
Fav'ring the Queen, hath ſnatch'd her from the ſtroke
Of lifted thunder; but the bolt is hurl'd,
And on her head the ruin ſhall rebound.
Her ſtern refuſal to partake the feaſt,
In foul ſuſpicion will confirm the King;
Abſolve us, and to her transfer the crime.
With hope attend th' event. [*Exit* Soh.

SCENE VIII.

SALOME *alone.*

Sal. On this great hour
Shine all ye planets, whoſe malignant rays
Blaſt the fair proſp'rous growth of regal pow'r!
Hark!—Death's in action: from the banquet ſounds
The muſic of his triumphs; groans, and cries.

SCENE IX.

To her PHERORAS *enters.*

Pher. Give me, good Heaven! to feed on wholeſome herbs
In camps, and drink the pure untainted ſpring;
Since death in ambuſh lyes in ſparkling cups,
And courtly viands!

Sal. Why, my Lord, ſo pale?
What ſtrange diſorder ends the feſtival?

Pher. Sameas, the wretch whom I preferr'd to court,
Deſign'd to poiſon all.

Sal. Avert it, Heav'ns!
I hope he fail'd.

Pher. His felon cheek ne'er chang'd
Its colour, when he brought th' impoiſon'd bowl,
With garlands crown'd, and gave it to the King:
Who, with the fondneſs of a lover, cry'd,
He'd not indulge his taſte, becauſe the Queen
Refus'd t'adorn the circle; ſo reſign'd
To Hazeroth the pledge of royal grace.
Sudden his lips grew livid, and diſcharg'd
A purple foam; his lab'ring boſom ſwell'd;

His eyeballs like malignant meteors glar'd,
Unmov'd and ghaſtly, as the venom ſpread,
Frightful convulſions writh'd his tortur'd limbs;
Then mad with anguiſh, rolling to the floor,
He groan'd his ſoul away.

Sul. All 'ſcap'd but he?

Pher. Had not the villain over-drug'd the wine,
We all had periſh'd.

SCENE X.

HEROD *enters on one ſide of the ſtage*, SOHEMUS *on the other.*

Her. aſide to Soh.] Will the Queen obey
Our order, and attend us?

Soh. Sir, ſhe comes
With much reluctance.

Enter MARIAMNE.

Her. to Mar.] Did the banquet want
Variety, or elegance of art,
T' engage you to partake? If all our court
Had been alike abſtemious, Death had miſs'd
A rich repaſt.

Mar. Death! I can bear the ſound:
Ill Fate is grown familiar to my ear.

Her. There let it meet your eye.

[*She goes to the door which he points to.*

O'er the black crime
How white a veil of innocence ſhe throws!

Soh. Her eyes glance indignation, now ſhe finds
Th' invenom'd dart hath err'd.

Mar. Poor Hazeroth!
Thy freedom coſt thee dear!

Her. You have been full,
In puniſhing the traitor's inſolence,
Whom in exceſs of clemency I ſpar'd,
Becauſe ally'd to you.

Mar. Murder'd by me!——
So let the tiger ſheath his ſavage fangs,
And for the mangled fawn implead the roe!

To build my frame the forming pow'r infus'd
Too mild a ſpirit, in too ſoft a mould,
For ſuch Barbarian deeds. Who wears the ſword
That, fleſh'd in ſlaughter, levell'd to the duſt
The royal ſtem whence that poor ſcion ſprung?
[*Pointing towards* Haz.
Who doom'd to death the hoary majeſty
Of good Hyrcanus? Whoſe infatiate rage
Murder'd my royal father, and his ſon?
Bid Fame to late poſterity report
That Mariamne did it:——She deſtroy'd
Her grandſire, father, uncle, brother, all
Her Aſmonæan race; and then conſtrain'd
Herod to wear a crown!

Her. So grac'd, to fall
A nobler victim to her laſt revenge!

Mar. Call your brib'd witneſſes; they're uſeful paint
To varniſh acts of arbitrary rage.

Her. Why comes not Sameas? [*Exit* Sohemus.
Oh, how bleſt am I!
If Heaven preſerves that angel from the ſeat
Of Innocence and Truth: but much I fear
Too plain conviction; for thy dream reveal'd
This meditated crime: I heard thee cry,
The King is poiſon'd.——But attend the proof.

SCENE XI.

SOHEMUS *enters with* SAMEAS.

Soh. aſide to Sam.] The diamond will confirm your evidence.

Her. Sameas, beware, and tremble to tranſgreſs
The bounds of truth: if one aſſertion fail
Of utmoſt evidence againſt the Queen;
Thou for a ſingle fiction ſhalt deſcend
Quick to the heart of hell. Who gave the drugs
That poiſon'd Hazeroth?

Sam. Arſinoe ſaid
She brought them from the Queen; and much extoll'd
Their pow'rful virtue to revive the flames
Of dying love.

Mar. Heaven guard my innocence!

Her. Haſte, call Arſinoe.——

Sah. Sir, ſhe fled the court
In great diſorder.

Her. How!

Sah. The Roman camp
Protects her guilt.

Her. A potion to revive
The flames of love! Did e'er my paſſion need
The wicked pow'r of art to make it glow? [*To Mar.*
O'erwhelm'd with blank confuſion!——

Mar. Muſt a dream,
The tranſient image of a troubled thought,
Join'd with that villain's frontleſs perjury,
Be clear conſummate proof, t' affirm a fact
Wou'd make fiends ſtart, and ſtand in wild amaze
Abſtracted from their hate? Can he produce
A promiſe of rewards, or preſent bribe
To fortify this proof?

Sam, Arſinoe gave
This precious token of your future grace. [*Shews a jewel.*

Her. Know you this diamond, Sorcereſs?

Mar. 'Tis the ſame
You gave me on your birth-day.

Her. To be made
The lure of death——O foul!

Mar. Arſinoe's falſe;
Send, intercept her flight; let her confront
His evidence; and if they both conſpire
T' attaint my innocence——

Her. My guards——ſecure [*To the Captain of the guard.*
That wicked woman with a double guard——
Seize her, I ſay!

Mar. Friend, tremble not t' obey
His orders; thou'rt a ſoldier.——But, my Lord,
Think not theſe tears, the frailty of my ſex,
Argue a ſenſe of guilt, or ſervile hope
Of moving pity, to retard my doom:——
I weep not for myſelf, nor wiſh to ward
The blow, whene'er miſguided juſtice ſtrikes:

But if I e'er was treasur'd in your heart;
For sure you lov'd me once——
Her. And lov'd too well!
May all who hate me, love as much as I,
And then be thus requited!
Mar. When I'm dead,
O, let the stream of dear affection flow,
Redoubled on my son! To him transfer
The share I've lost.——And never may the wrong
His mother bears, obstruct the sweet returns
Of filial duty, and paternal love!
But may my memory his soul inspire
To scorn inglorious life, when honour calls
Greatly to act, or suffer in her cause:
And think the debt which death is sure to claim,
A tribute due to virtue, and to fame! [*Exeunt.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

Enter HEROD *and* PHERORAS.

PHERORAS.

THE silent night hath pass'd her sable noon;
In mercy to your realm, regard your health,
Compose yourself to sleep.
Her. Bid the wretch sleep,
Whose limbs, extended on the rack, endure
The utmost stretch of pain: I suffer more!
More, my Pheroras, more! The balm of sleep
Can ne'er refresh these eyes, 'till the pale hand
Of death shall draw their curtains, and exclude
The busy buzzing swarm of stinging thoughts.
My bed, the scene of all my blissful hours,
Of all my tender, chaste, endearing joys,
Which now have wing'd their everlasting flight,
Is grown the den of horror and despair.
O Mariamne!——With my setting sun,
Ill fortune now projects a deeper shade:

I wish I were as I had never been:
Number'd among the dead.

Pher. Sir, let her crime
Erase the faithful characters, which love
Imprinted on your heart.

Her. Alas, the pain
We feel, whene'er we dispossess the soul
Of that tormenting tyrant, far exceeds
The rigor of his rule.

Pher. With reason quell
That haughty passion; treat it as your slave:
Resume the monarch.

Her. Where's the monarch now?——
The vulgar call us gods, and fondly think
That kings are cast in more than mortal molds:
Alas, they little know that when the mind
Is cloy'd with pomp, our taste is pall'd with joy;
But grows more sensible of grief or pain.
The stupid peasant with as quick a sense
Enjoys the fragrance of a rose, as I:
And his rough hand is proof against the thorn,
Which rankling in my tender skin, wou'd seem
A viper's tooth. O blissful poverty!
Nature, too partial, to thy lot assigns
Health, freedom, innocence, and downy peace,
Her real goods; and only mocks the great
With empty pageantries: had I been born
A cottager, my homely bowl had flow'd
Secure from pois'nous drugs; but now my wife!——
Let me, good Heav'n, forget that guilty name,
Or madness will ensue!——

SCENE II.

To them the HIGHPRIEST *enters.*

Her. At this late hour,
When only discontented spectres roam,
In moon-light walks; or yet more anxious men,
With pangs of agonizing passion torn,
Accuse their stars; and with their sorrows make

The midnight echoes mourn; at this late hour
What diſcords break the virtuous harmony,
Which wont to reign within thy pious breaſt?

Highp. O, that, my royal Lord, that which will ſpread
O'er Paleſtine the blackeſt veil of woe,
That ever nation wore! Forgive my zeal,
Which breaks through courtly forms, to execute
The Heavenly office which my order claims.
Peace is my province; and I proſtrate beg,
By all your public and domeſtic joys!
By the dear offspring of your royal bed!
By all that merits your regard, releaſe
Your injur'd Queen!

Her. Have you not heard her crime?
Shall I reſume a ſorcereſs to my breaſt,
Who unprovok'd, with black infernal hate
Attempted our perdition? No!——

Highp. My liege!
Her gentle goodneſs ne'er cou'd break the band
Of nature, and the ſtronger ties of love——

Her. Thirſt for her huſband's blood!——A lioneſs
Is kinder to her mate.

Highp. It cannot be.
Some wretch hath ſold his mercenary ſoul,
T' accuſe her without cauſe.

Her. Is all our court
Combin'd in perjury? They all condemn
Her execrable deed.

Highp. Their tongues are tun'd
To what they think delights the royal ear:
In this confuſion, ſhou'd a comet riſe,
They'd cry, the Queen hath ſet the world o'fire!
Vouchſafe her audience, Sir; hear her defence
With cool impartial reaſon; error oft
Aſſumes the ſhape of truth, and the wild eye
Of paſſion rarely can at firſt diſcern
Th' impoſture in diſguiſe. Let not your heart,
Where late her beauteous image was inſhrin'd,
Be now immur'd with marble from her pray'r:
Offended Heav'n with pitying ear accepts

The ſighs of penitents, and freelier grants
Acceſs when ſooneſt ſought.—

Her. Did ſhe requeſt
Admittance to me?

Highp. Yes; with ſuch an air
Of grief enobled with majeſtic grace;
With ſuch undaunted fortitude of mind,
Soften'd with penſive ſweetneſs in her eyes,
That ſpeaks her wrong'd; none but a ſoul as white,
As new-born innocence, cou'd ſhine ſo clear
On the dim verge of death.—My gracious Lord,
Forgive the frailties of forgetful age!
She took this ruby bracelet from her arm,
Which on this anniverſe ſhe won't to wear;
In ſweet remembrance of the nuptial morn,
When firſt you ty'd it on: Reſtore, ſhe cry'd,
This pledge of fond affection to the King:
Tell him, howe'er unkind! I've yet deſerv'd
To wear no other chain than this of love;——
Then wept a tender ſhow'r. [Herod *takes the bracelet.*

Her. The time hath been,
I'd not have ſeen my Mariamne drop
One precious tear, for all the radiant mines
The womb of earth contains; but now her heart
Is chang'd, and ſo muſt mine!—Yet if ſhe craves
To ſee me now, give orders; let the guard
Conduct her to me. [*Exeunt* Her. *and* Pher.

Highp. Now with ſpeedy flight,
Deſcend celeſtial miniſters of peace!
Who kindle virtuous ardors, and preſide
O'er nuptial vows: aid with auſpicious zeal
The firm reunion of thoſe royal hearts:
And never, never from your charge remove,
'Till death's commiſſion'd to divide their love! [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

Enter SOHEMUS *and* SALOME.

Soh. Thus far, with Fate to friend, and greatly ſir'd
With bright ambition, we've purſu'd the path

To glory; and with ſwift and eaſy ſteps,
Approach the ſummit of imperial pow'r.
Sal. But ſhould the King's enfeebled ſoul relent,
And pardon Mariamne?
Soh. She'll diſdain
To reaſcend the throne, or owe her life
To low ſubmiſſion: for the ſtubborn ſenſe
Of genuine virtue in a royal mind
Ne'er ſoftens with affliction; but becomes
The more obdurate, when it once hath griev'd;
As metals after melting harder grow.

SCENE IV.

To them SAMEAS *enters.*

Sal. Sameas, thou beſt of friends! thy wiſh'd approach
By inſtinct I perceiv'd; thy influence ſpreads
Like rich perfumes, which, tho' inviſible,
Refreſh the ſenſe.
Sam. Madam, I hop'd my art
Had well deſerv'd a jewel of your own,
T'engage my ſervice; 'twas too politic
To feign a favour but to ſerve your cauſe,
When the nice article of proof came on.
Sal. Contemn that worthleſs pebble; we're intent
On far more glorious views; whole provinces
Shall recompence thy love.
Sam. Rather conſult
Our common ſafety; life is all I crave.
Sal. What may'ſt thou mean?
Sam. Th' High-prieſt hath won the King
To ſee the Queen to-night.
Soh. Impoſſible!
Sam. But now I met him ſpeeding croſs the court;
Round him a rabble of her menial ſlaves
Ran big with joy!!!
Soh. Confound his holy craft!——
Fortune at once rowls back the bounteous flow
Of hope, and leaves us gaſping on the ſhore!——
[Salome *whiſpers* Sohemus.
I'll do it.

Sam. What, my Lord?—What muſt we do?———

Soh. Why——ſuffer greatly, ſince we cannot act!
Thy part remains to perſevere, tho' racks
Strain every ſinew ſmaller than the threads
Which form a ſpider's web.—Ne'er hope for grace.

Sam. I'll riſk the event, and go. [Sohemus *ſtabs him.*

Soh. To hell!
To hell! poor timorous wretch, and tell the devil—

[*In the ſtruggle* Sameas *wreſts the dagger out of* Sohemus's *hand; and in falling backward he ſtrikes it into* Salome's *boſom, and dies.*

Soh. Princeſs ador'd and lov'd! Oh!——ſpeak!

Sal. Death! Death!———
Save me, O Sohemus, from that black troop
Of grizly ſhapes, which in fantaſtic dance
Friſk round, and call me hence.—O, kind in vain—
A fiery whirlwind bears me from thy arms
To ſeas of boiling ſulphur; the blue waves
Receive me to their boſom.—Down! deep! deep!

[*She dies.*

SCENE V.

Enter HEROD *and* PHERORAS *with Attendants.*

Her. What hideous ſound of ſhrieks and dying groans
Echo'd from hence, as if by violence
A ſoul had left her manſion unprepar'd!

Pher. Horrors! our ſiſter dead!

Soh. That villain came [*Pointing to* Sameas's *body.*
In all the geſtures of extreme deſpair;
Crying ſhe brib'd him to accuſe the Queen;
And having heard Arſinoe wou'd return
To null his evidence, rage and remorſe
Urg'd him to plunge the dagger in her breaſt,
And then he pierc'd himſelf.

Her. O Salome!
The jarring elements which compos'd thy frame,
Made thee aſpiring, turbulent and bold:
In others woe was thy ſupreme delight;
And moſt againſt my Queen thy malice aim'd
Her venom'd ſhafts; but now thy guilty blood

Will quench the flames, which thy infernal torch
Spread o'er the harveſt of my nuptial joys.

Soh. How blind, alas! to fate is the dim eye
Of dull mortality!

Her. O Sohemus!
A thrilling horror freezeth every vein,
While I review the precipice of fate,
Where late I ſtood perplex'd; but one ſtep more
Had plung'd me in th' abyſs of endleſs woe,
A moſt conſummate wretch!—But here ſhe comes,

MARIAMNE *enters in a mourning habit.*

Welcome as night, with ſweet refreſhing ſhade,
And balmy dews, to the faint traveller;
Who journies o'er a waſte of burning ſands,
With painful ſteps and ſlow.——Remove the dead!
She hath no vengeful appetite to glut,
With ſuch ſad ſpectacles. [*All go out except* Herod.

SCENE VI.

HEROD *and* MARIAMNE.

Her. Approach, my Queen!
Thou deareſt miracle of Nature's hand,
Adorn'd with all perfections!

Mar. Dare you truſt
Your murd'reſs near you?

Her. Thy ſoft innocence
Was form'd to kill with darts of keen deſire:
I beg thoſe pleaſing wounds: approach, my fair!
Heav'ns! at the ſight of that celeſtial face,
Each ſavage paſſion from the ſoul retires,
As wolves forſake the fold, when firſt the ſun
Flames o'er the eaſtern hills. Oh, thus, thus, thus!
I'll claſp thee ever to my heaving breaſt!
Thus on thy lips in glowing rapture ſeal
A firm eternal union of our ſouls!——

Mar. In vain!—They who diſſolv'd the firſt, have pow'r
To cancel this.

Her. Diſmiſs that groundleſs fear:
Sameas and Salome are now no more;

They've puniſh'd their own guilt, and the laſt breath
Of faction ſpoke thy virtue greatly wrong'd.
Mar. But the ſame judge ſurvives, whoſe credulous ear
Drank all that perjur'd malice cou'd infuſe.
You, who condemn'd me for the blackeſt crime,
On evidence too counterfeit and light
To cheat an idiot's eye, betray'd a will
Diſpos'd to credit ev'ry feign'd report;
Whene'er malignant paſſion ſhall provoke
Other artificers of fraud, t' aſſault
My life or honour.
Her. That unkind reproach
Wou'd change to ſoft compaſſion, had you felt
The ſtings of ſorrow which transfix'd my ſoul,
When firſt you were accus'd: I wou'd not bear
Such agonies again, for all the crowns
Which e'er ambition ſigh'd for.
Mar. To yourſelf
You owe whate'er you ſuffer'd; and your pain
Was but the fancied torture of a dream:
But wounds of honour bleed for ever new;
Their anguiſh is ſincere! My fame muſt bear
The blaſt of Cenſure, and the letter'd ſpleen
Of future ſtory.
Her. No; thy fame will ſhine
More bright, emerging from this ſhort eclipſe:
The marks of envy give diſtinguiſh'd grace
To virtue; as indented ſcars adorn
The ſoldier's breaſt.
Mar. I wiſh my innocence
Wanted that mark of honour, which the tongue
Of malice will miſcall the brand of guilt.
Her. The whiteſt ermin on her ſkin may bear
An accidental ſpot; yet none accuſe
Her native purity, but call the ſtain
The crime of Fortune. To the doubtful world,
My edict ſoon will vindicate thy fame;
Lodge that, and all thy cares within my breaſt;
Where every geſture, word, and look inſpire
The ſpirit of pureſt love!

Mar. For which I wear
This livery of death——it ſuits the day
Which gave me to your arms!
Her. But now, diſrob'd
Of thoſe ſad weeds, and every gloomy thought,
Smile like an angel breaking from a cloud.
While Peace, and Joy, and ever-young Deſire
Attend thee to my bed, each wedded pair
Shall make our bliſs the meaſure of their vows!
Mar. Your bed! The tiger ſhall as ſoon perſuade
The hunted deer to harbour in his den.——
Her. Damp not my glowing paſſion with a thought
Of ſeparation! Did our dates extend
To the ſame length the giant race enjoy'd,
When Nature yet was young, I then ſhou'd dread
The ſad idea of our laſt divorce;
Tho' ſure that many ſmiling centuries
Wou'd roll 'twixt death and us!—O, did thy love
But equal mine, we'd each in other live
So join'd, that when Fate ſtrikes we both might fall!
I'd not ſurvive thy doom.
Mar. Nor can I yours!
Her. The words are what I wiſh, but ill explain'd
By that ſtern look and haughty voice.
Mar. Enquire
Of that domeſtic oracle your heart:
If that reſolves not the myſterious ſenſe,
Aſk Sohemus.——
Her. Confuſion!
Mar. Do you ſtart?
With ſudden rays of dawning truth amaz'd!
As fiends wou'd be, ſhou'd the meridian ſun
Blaze on their black abodes.
Her. Can neither words
Nor actions ought avail? but muſt diſdain
Repay my generous paſſion? Is thy rage
Grown ſo implacable, no tender proofs
Are prevalent t' aſſuage it!
Mar. 'Twas a proof
Of tender love, to doom me to the ſword

By ſuch an order, as barbarian hate
Wou'd only dictate in the rage of war!
And with that engine of clandeſtine death
To arm the malice of my foe profeſt!——
On Sohemus you ſafely might rely,
To ſend me ſoon to mingle with your duſt.

Her. O villain! perjur'd villain! to betray
That charge on which depended all my peace!
On which his life depended!——Nothing leſs
Than the damn'd witchcraft of thy wicked charms,
Cou'd tempt him to the very cave of Death,
To wanton with his darts.—Tear him, ye fiends!—
To that falſe cheek diſſembling Nature gave
The bluſh of virtue, for a veil to luſt:
He breath'd that fatal ſecret to thy ear
In amorous murmurs, when the ſlave was grown
Frantic with ecſtaſy——

Mar. My fame defies
Th' envenom'd breath of Slander; all my hours
Have kept ſevereſt virtue for their guard.
But I preſage, offended Heav'n prepares
To puniſh that exceſs of virgin-love;
By which betray'd, I gave my nuptial vow,
Againſt the ſolemn ſanction of our law,
And to an alien's care transferr'd the charge
Of pure religion; who, to flatter Rome
Neglects her altars, and her faith profanes.

Her. Guards!——Take her hence!

Guards enter.

No fooliſh fond remorſe
Shall now delay my vengeance!——

[*The Guards lead off* Mar.

Love, farewell!——
Rather than doat on her polluted charms,
My ſword ſhall rip the paſſion from my heart.
Adultery!——Ye violated heav'ns
Dart the red lightning, wing'd with tenfold rage,
To blaſt the adultreſs! Why did ye forbear
To rivet cloſer, with hot thunderbolts,
The ſerpents twiſted in the folds of luſt?

SCENE VII.

PHERORAS *enters.*

Her. Pheroras, oh!—ten thouſand rebels arm:
Grief, Horror, Shame, Diſtraction!—they beſiege
The poor ſoul, wav'ring in the fort of life,
And wiſhing to ſurrender! Thy kind ſword
Might end this inſurrection: Dar'ſt thou ſtrike?
[*Points to his breaſt.*

Pher. Heav'n ſhield from violence that ſacred breaſt!
Fear, guilt, deſpair, and moon-ſtruck frenzy ruſh
On voluntary death: the wiſe and brave,
When the fierce ſtorms of Fortune round 'em roar,
Combat the billows with redoubled force;
Then, if they periſh ere the port is gain'd,
They ſink with decent pride; and from the deep
Honour retrieves them, bright as riſing ſtars.
Call reaſon to your aid, and with your friends
Divide your care: doubt not but Sohemus——

Her. Thou nam'ſt the very ſcorpion which hath ſtung
The centre of my heart.

Pher. Then make his blood
Balm for the wound.

Her. The wound admits no cure:
Nor Reaſon, nor the healing hand of Time
Can bring relief: but Heav'n inſpire my heart,
Before it breaks, with new-devis'd revenge,
Equal to that perfidious villain's crime!——
Were his approaches frequent to the Queen,
When I was abſent?

Pher. No; he ever ſtood
The diſtant object of her hate.

Her. With eaſe
They might elude your eye; but Salome,
And Sameas ſure were conſcious of their crimes,
For which he murder'd both; and ſhe prepar'd
The pois'nous bowl for me. But from that ſlave
Tortures ſhall wring the truth I dread to know.
Secure him for the rack! and let the Queen
Drink the ſame fatal draught ſhe drug'd for me!—

Inſtant, with her own deathful art deſtroy
Th' artificer of death! O Mariamne!——
Why wouldſt thou wrong my honour, and my love,
And urge this direful doom? [Exit Pher.

SCENE VIII.

FLAMINIUS *enters to* HEROD.

Her. My Roman friend,
Your unexpected viſit finds my court
In wild diſorder.

Fla. Sir, the Queen's deſire
To ſee the Prince occaſion'd my return
At this uncourtly hour.

Her. Few hours have paſs'd
Since you beheld me in triumphant ſtate:
Now, like a meteor from a ſummer ſky,
Inglorioufly I'm fall'n!

Fla. Baniſh Deſpair,
And all her gloomy train: doubt not but Fate
In her large volume ſtill for you reſerves
A page, as full of glory as the paſt.

Her. Glory, Flaminius!——Will an empty name,
A ſhining bubble, which the vulgar breath
Of thoughtleſs crowds can ſwell for whom they pleaſe,
E'er recompenſe the loſs I muſt ſuſtain?
My Queen! my wife! the jewel of my ſoul!

Fla. Mercy's the brighteſt ornament of pow'r,
And now moſt needful to preſerve your peace.

Her. Juſtice muſt be my mercy: ſhe muſt die!——
She muſt!——

Fla. But, Sir, 'tis ſafer much to ſheathe
The ſword of juſtice, ſince the deſtin'd blow
Will chiefly wound yourſelf. Without your Queen,
Your palace, though with gay retinue throng'd,
Will ſeem a ſavage deſert. You muſt view
The mother blooming in your beauteous child,
Nor feel a father's joy! Each object here
Will rouze the ſad remembrance of the bliſs
You once poſſeſs'd with her! How will you wiſh

For that ſweet converſe, when the ſmiling hours
Danc'd to the muſic of her heav'nly voice,
And the ſhort years were loſt in dear delight!
But when her charms are ſilent, diſmal change!
Slow ſullen Time on raven wings will fly
Heavy and black! Around you then you'll ſee
Your ſon, your nobles, and domeſtics chang'd:
For each, as their peculiar grief ſhall urge,
With penſive ſilence will upbraid the loſs
Of mother, queen, or friend. But what's the loſs
Of mother, queen, or friend, compar'd to yours?
A wife, the beſt, the loveliеſt of her ſex,
And late the beſt belov'd! in the full pride
Of ſummer-beauty, like a poiſonous weed
Torn from the earth, and by her huſband's hand
Unkindly caſt to wither in the grave!

Her. My fate wou'd force from Rigour's flinty eye
Ev'n tears of blood! [*He weeps.*

Fla. O! Sir, reflect, if thus
The bare recital wounds your fancy now,
A yet more dreadful pain may pierce your heart!
Love may once more revive, vain hopeleſs love!
When the dear object of your longing ſoul
Lyes mould'ring in the duſt. If ſo, the wretch
Who buried in a trance returns to life,
And walks diſtracted o'er the rattling bones
Of his dead fathers, in the dreary vault,
Leſs horror feels, than ſad remorſe will raiſe
Within your breaſt!

Her. O Mariamne loſt!
To love for ever loſt! to love and me!——
I've liv'd Love's ſlave too long; but Jealouſy,
That yellow fiend! hath dipt the torch in gall,
And now 'twill light no more.——

Fla. If the Queen's falſe,
My wife hath been officious to her crimes,
And ſhares in the pollution: let her plea
Be heard; and if ſhe fails in her defence,
I'll ſlay her at your feet.

[Flam. *goes out, and returns immediately with* Arſince.

SCENE IX.

HEROD *to* ARSINOE.

Her. As heav'nly peace
May ſooth your anguiſh, when the fluttering ſoul
Prepares to wing her laſt eternal flight,
Aſſiſt my quiet, and reſolve my doubts:
Was Sohemus admitted to the Queen,
Whilſt I was gone to Rhodes?

Arſ. Never, my Lord.

Her. Never!

Arſ. His name's offenſive to her ear:
And for his perſon——no antipathy
In nature can be ſtronger.

Her. So I thought;
But ſuch fictitious arts too oft conceal
Criminal correſpondence: they might write,
And doubtleſs did!

Arſ. That commerce cou'd not 'ſcape
My notice, who, by conſtant duty bound,
Waited ſo near the Queen.

Her. What if ſhe ſaw?
Her intereſt then, and now her fear prevails
To ſeal the lips of truth.

Fla. Sir, not the frown
Of majeſty, nor brandiſh'd thunder awes
A Roman ſpirit, (ſuch I hope ſhe bears),
To make it ſtart from the plain tracks of truth,
And deviate into falſehood.

Her. Can the Queen
Pierce to the cloſe receſſes of the ſoul;
Are thoughts there viſible, like children's toys
Kept in a cryſtal caſe? Does ſhe retain
Dæmons, to ſit ſecure from mortal ſight,
In princes cabinets to learn the ſum
Of ſecret councils? Told they this decree,
If Cæſar, to revenge the ſacred faith
I held with Anthony, ſhou'd to the ſword
Sentence my head, that hers ſhould likewiſe fall,

Leſt the proud ſucceſſor who ſeiz'd my throne,
Shou'd triumph in my bed?——No! that reſolve
A carnal fiend imparted; and ſhe paid
His ſervice with her honour!——

Arſ. Royal Sir,
Her honour is unblemiſh'd; all the blame
Transfer to my officious zeal:——I told
That fatal ſecret.

Her. How!——Did Sohemus
Impart that moſt important charge to you?

Arſ. To me his vows of love were then addreſs'd;
Which when diſdain'd, with more perſuaſive force,
To recommend his paſſion, he reveal'd
The dreadful mandate left in truſt: and ſwore
That if you periſh'd by the hand of Rome,
My love alone was ranſom for the life
Of my dear royal miſtreſs.

Her. Fly, O fly!
Swift as the cherub to preſerve his charge,
Reverſe the doom of death. [*Exit* Arſinoe.

SCENE X.

To them PHERORAS *enters.*

Her. to Pher.] Is Sohemus
Secur'd for torture?

Pher. Sir, he took th' alarm,
And fled for ſafety to the royal tow'r,
The portal forc'd, the ſoldiers found him fall'n
Of his ſelf-ſlaught'ring ſword, ſtretch'd on the ground,
Welt'ring in blood, he ſpeechleſs there expir'd.

Her. Too far confiding in that traitor's ſkill
In arts of rule, he ſo miſus'd my pow'r,
That diſtant ſtory may record my reign
From year to year, by many a cruel deed;
As the wild progreſs of a ſtorm is trac'd
By marks of deſolation.

SCENE, *the Laſt.*

MARIAMNE *enters, ſupported by the* HIGHPRIEST *and* NARBAL; ARSINOE *follows with the young Prince.*

Her. Heav'ns avert
The bodings of my ſoul! I fear the Queen——
Highp. Oh, Sir!——
Her. Hah! ſay'ſt thou——
Highp. A few moments more
Will rank her with the dead.
Arſ. Ere I arriv'd
The deadly draught was giv'n, which ſoon will end
The ſenſe of all her woes.
Her. And all my joys——
O call, call our phyſicians! now let Art
Exert her ſaving pow'r, or ever prove
The miniſter of death!——
Mar. The venom's ſpread
Too far for Art.
Her. O! wiſh to live, and Heav'n
Will crown thy wiſh with life; Heav'n will be juſt
To that bright innocence which I have wrong'd!
Wrong'd with exceſs of love to fury wrought!
O wretch, wretch, wretch!
Mar. Death's welcome, now I hear
My innocence avow'd.
Her. I, I, whoſe life
Was bound with thine, by ſtriving to ſecure
Thy beauties all my own, have kill'd the dove
I fondly graſp'd too cloſe! O ſee! ſhe's pale:
Take, take, ye Powers, my life to lengthen hers!
Chain me, ye furies, to your burning wheel!
Whip me ten thouſand years with ſcorpions there,
To ſave her life!——
Mar. I pity and forgive
Your violence of paſſion, which hath wrought
The ruin of us both!
Her. I ill deſerve

Thy pardon or thy pity——Yet vouchſafe,
Thou faireſt pattern of tranſcendent Goodneſs,
Vouchſafe thy wretched Lord a laſt embrace,
Whoſe ſoul is ready wing'd to wait on thine!
Oh—bleſs the dying penitent with peace,
The moments which remain!——

Mar. Good Heav'n inſure. [*They embrace.*
Eternal peace to both!

Her. Thou ſhalt not die——
Thou art too young, too faultleſs, and too fair,
To fall a prey to Death!

Mar. The thick'ning ſhades
O'erſpread my ſwimming eyes—Where is my child?
Bring him, poor babe, to take a parting kiſs!——
Farewell——I'm now at peace. [*She dies.*

Highp. In that ſoft ſigh
The gentle ſpirit ſoar'd.

Arſ. Oh, dead, dead, dead!

Her. Then, Death, ſtrike on!
Fate, thou haſt done thy worſt!—— [*He faints.*

Pher. My royal brother! Oh——

Nar. My gracious Lord!——

Highp. Good Heav'n, reſtore to wretched Paleſtine
Her ſole ſupport and grace!

Her. What miniſter [*Raiſing himſelf.*
Of this dark realm art thou?——If 'tis thy poſt
To guide the dead through this diſaſtrous gloom;
Lead to that mournful manſion, where the ghoſts
Of thoſe abide, whom fatal Beauty ſent
Untimely to the ſhades!—See, ſee, ſhe ſoars;—
How bright a track ſhe leaves along the ſky,
And looks with pity down! Oh ſee! ſhe reſts
On the ſoft fleece of yonder purple cloud,
Where angels fan her with their golden plumes!
Stay, Mariamne, ſtay!—— [*He ſinks into their arms.*

Pher. O! from his face
The bluſh of life retires.

Nar. His boſom heaves
With ſtrong convulſive throes!

Ela. Raiſe him, my Lords.

Her. Alas! forbear; ye but prolong the pains
Of lab'ring Nature: let me ſink to peace;
And may Oblivion caſt her ſable veil
O'er my ſad ſtory, and conceal the crimes
Of majeſty miſled! My urn, alas!
Can hope for no compaſſion: when the doom
Of my dear, lovely, virtuous Queen is told,
The tears will freeze on Pity's gentle cheek,
And not bedew my aſhes!——To your care [*To Fla.*
Receive this royal orphan, and implore
Cæſar's protection to preſerve his crown.
And when mature in manhood, he receives
A conſort to his throne, may every grace
And every virtue join, to make her ſtyl'd
The Mariamne of th' admiring age!——
May ſweet compliance, honour, dear eſteem,
And mutual faith cement their mutual joys!
But ever may he ſhun too fond exceſs;
That ſoft ſeducing impotence of mind,
By which ſubdu'd, his wretched father fell!
Led by imperious Love a tortur'd ſlave,
To the ſad refuge of an early grave! [*He dies.*

[*Exeunt omnes.*

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by Mrs SEYMOUR.

THE Poet in a whim extremely new,
Coupl'd me with a ſtrange enamour'd Jew;
So violently fond! the loſs of life
Was far leſs dreadful than to leave his wife:
Monſter of love! He whiſper'd in my ear,
I doat ſo much——I pr'ythee die, my dear.
Ladies, if ſuch demands are made on beauty,
Defend us all from matrimonial duty!
One may ſupport a living husband's folly;
But let him feed the worms alone for Molly——
And yet 'tis vain to reaſon, or to rail,
The tempter Man was deſtin'd to prevail:
To hear him flatter, ſigh, implore, proteſt,
A . . . . je ne ſçai quoi *. . . . will flutter in the breaſt.*
But o'er intrigues whatever planet reigns,
And fires to Bedlam-*rage a lover's brains,*
One honey-moon's ſufficient to reſtore 'em
From wild impertinence to cool decorum.
By this plain model had the play been wrought,
My Hebrew *ſpark had acted as he ought;*
With a keen appetite enjoy'd the feaſt,
And, decently ſuffic'd, withdrawn to reſt:
But, glutton-like, to grudge the world his leaving,
Was wond'rous unpolite, to my conceiving!
Homer, *who human nature nicely knew,*
(Ye critics, I read Greek *. . . . as well as you),*
In colours of a ſofter kind diſplay'd
The husband civil to the wife who ſtray'd.

Though Helen *had clop'd, her gentle lord*
Renew'd her forfeit claim to bed and board;
For which dear foible *of the fair forgiv'n,*
The gods vouchſaf'd to ſend him quick to heav'n;
And in no Spartan *novel can I find,*
The good man griev'd to leave his ſpouſe behind.
In ſuch gay lights when wedded life is ſhown,
What couple wou'd not wiſh the caſe their own?
But, gallants, if you Herod's *rule approve,*
To give no quarter in the liſts of love;
If jealous rage, or fond fantaſtic dreams,
Exalt your paſſion to ſuch dire extremes;
Let each bright Mariamne *chuſe her man,*
Then kill us all . . . . with kindneſs, if ye can.

END OF MARIAMNE.